

**BEADLE & GRIMM'S EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK!**

# DRAGON+

Inside Max  
Dunbar's hellscape  
sketchbook



**EXTRA LIFE 2019:  
PLAY GAMES,  
HEAL KIDS**

**DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®**

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ISSUE 27

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## Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 27

We thank Dungeon Master Chris Boyce for his major contribution to Extra Life by welcoming him on board as our Guest Editor this issue! We salute his decades-old campaign world later in the magazine, after he first reveals his personal experiences with D&D below.

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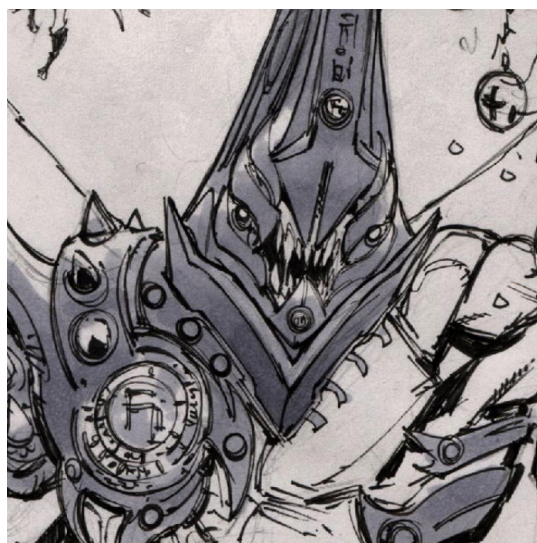
## Imagining the Ampersand: Emi Tanji

Artist Emi Tanji has captured some of the Nine Hells' most adorable inhabitants to raise money for Extra Life. And no, we're not including that ram-headed abyssal chicken.



## In the Works

Our roundup of (nearly) every D&D item in production right now includes an exclusive reveal from Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus.



## Plotting the Descent

Artist Max Dunbar spills the secrets of crafting a Hellish landscape and its denizens as he shares his concept art with Dragon+.



## Character Concepts: Wizard Fashion

Looking for wizarding wear that's hotter than a fireball? Artist and illustrator Samantha Darcy highlights the latest trends



## Behind the Screen: Sign Language and D&D

Matt Chapman chats with interpreters on both sides of the

that will have you saying yes to the robes.

Atlantic working to make D&D more accessible for players and viewers who are hard of hearing.

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## Adventurers League

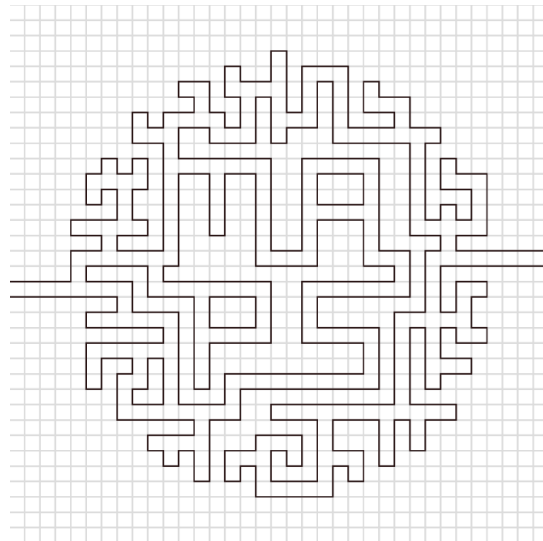
The devilish Chris Lindsay previews an Adventurers League campaign that sees players forge their fate in hellfire.



## The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

This issue we highlight mental health initiatives in gaming and celebrate Eberron's artificers and the constructs and vehicles they create.

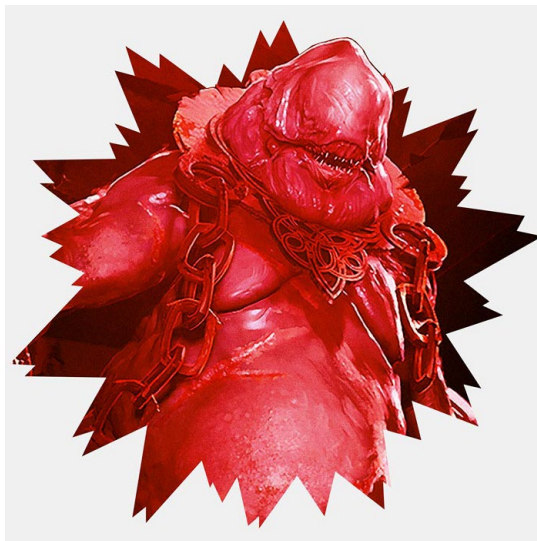
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## D&D Classics

A look back at vehicles of the clanking, rattling, and infernal kind. And the Single Class Ninja!

## Maps of the Month: Ghosts of Saltmarsh, Barber of Silverymoon, Six Faces of Death



## Creature Feature: Terror of Undermountain

Presenting the Terror of Undermountain! The terrifying

## Extra Life

As we give thanks for his Extra Life donation, Dungeon Master and Guest Editor Chris Boyce takes us on a trip to Sorceria—a campaign world decades in the

creature crafted from our recent Adobe contest.

making!



## Streaming Highlights

This issue's highlights reel includes a dedicated D&D news channel, live onstage play from the Edinburgh Fringe festival, and an ENnie Award winning show.

## Unearthed Arcana: Primal Path and Monastic Tradition

Testing out an unpredictable Primal Path feature for barbarians and a Monastic Tradition for conflicted monks.



## Next Issue: Dragon+ 28

New sourcebook Eberron: Rising from the Last War takes us back to Khorvaire and we burn rubber in Avernus when Dragon+ returns in October!

A huge thank you to Chris Boyce and everyone who helped with the creation of this issue.

# DRAGON+ 27

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### LET'S START SMALL AND WORK BIGGER. IN THIS CASE, GAMING MINIATURES...

I've been collecting miniatures since I first played Dungeons & Dragons. The collection has grown over thirty-five years, and I'm up to fourteen glass cabinets now in a dedicated game room. At least two of those cabinets are filled with old-school lead figures, which were hard to come by. They didn't sell many copies of those originally—typically they may only have five figures at each outlet—and you'd have to go down to your local hobby store to get them. I don't have as much patience as I used to when it comes to painting figures, but I'll still occasionally tailor them to fit a campaign. You might think, "These guys look right, but they need blue armor or a red coat instead of that white."

When you move home, you have to reorganize your collection because you've got all your dragons, your undead, your vampires, your sea creatures, your giants and so on. (I really like the new pre-painted figures. I buy boxes of those and I don't mind the multiples that come from





Chris Boyce

buying in bulk because you want twenty bug bears or thirty skeletons to play with.)

The funniest thing is when we have a new player. I'll tell them, "Why don't you go find yourself a miniature?" And they'll be over there for an hour because there are so many possibilities.

As fun as miniatures are, back in the day we were theater of the mind. We might put a piece of paper down on the table and draw an X and some zeroes and say, "Okay, the X is a zombie and you guys are the zeroes." I remember even being hesitant to start using the battle map, though once we did it took any confusion away. It's so much easier to see what's going on, especially when casting a fireball or viewing an effect such as a gas cloud.

## EARLY DAYS

The very first version of D&D I played was the "Red Box" D&D Starter Set with the Larry Elmore art on the front, which is traditional for those of us who started in the early '80s. I was maybe eleven or twelve and I got it as a present from my cousins who were the same age.

We played that version all the way up to the Immortals Set, otherwise known as the "Gold Box". While it was a lot of fun, we were obviously fudging a lot of gameplay.

Then when I got to high school, I found kids playing Advanced Dungeons & Dragons. At that point we took the opposite tack—instead of fudging things and knocking through, we were extremely vigilant. Our characters started at level 0 when they were naked and

you had to go off into the wilderness to find a sharp stick. We played one campaign for four years and I don't believe we ever broke fifth level.

In my opinion, the best game is somewhere between those extremes.



Chris Boyce, Chris Rowan, Gary Gelb, and Jeremy Hadwin

## THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN

I played with those same high school kids up until the age of eighteen. Folks then went off to college or work and I went into the military. We would meet at Christmas and Thanksgiving when people came back for holidays, and maybe get a couple of games in over the summer if we were lucky. We now try to play twice a month—if we can—for five hours on a Saturday.

As people have come and gone we've branched out into using Meetup.com which has worked out pretty well. From that, we've added Gary who is eighty-five and Jeremy who is twenty-three. That might seem like a large age gap across the table, but it's been great. Gary was playing at the dawn of the game in the '70s and can talk about that, while Jeremy had only ever played online before and had his very first live game at our table. Between us there's over 100 years of D&D experience at the table!

I'm glad that we were able to get back into D&D. It's such a story-driven game and has always provided a very positive experience for me. It's not about "winning" in the traditional sense, it's about that ongoing story and enjoying the journey along the way.

I personally think D&D is the reason myself and other folks I've played with have gone on to be so successful. The game teaches you to work with other people. It's not me against you, it's us against the world.

Chris Boyce



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## Imagining the Ampersand: Emi Tanji

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If you follow Wizards of the Coast Art Director Emi Tanji



**I** on **Twitter**, you'll have seen the unusual version of the abyssal chicken she uses as her profile picture. An arrow next to the drawing marks it out as “Emi” and *Dragon+* is fascinated to know more. Did she draw it as a variant of *Avernus*'s wildlife? Or is someone suggesting it looks like

her?

“This was actually part of the development for the *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* **dice set**,” she reveals. “It contains 11 dice, and there was a crazy brainstorm of ideas to try and figure out how to make it the best product we can for players. Max Dunbar came in to work with Richard Whitters on a **concept push** for *Descent Into Avernus* and he had produced the craziest, coolest things. So we had the idea of including monster cards featuring Max's art.



(Select to view)

“Max had a number of images that had not made it to final but were almost finished and looked so lovely. Richard contacted him and asked him to finish up some of those pieces so we could use them in the dice set. Max just killed it. As part of that, he doodled this scary looking lamb creature and very graciously gifted it to me. I love it! It's an honor to have a monster like that named after me. I find

creepy, weird, scary, crazy monsters strangely lovable.”

When did you first play D&D?

I actually first played when I got hired at Wizards of the Coast and was still working on *Magic: The Gathering*, *MapleStory* and a number of other games. I knew what D&D was but I had never played it before. Editor Cal Moore set up a lunchtime game once a week for an hour and I think everybody playing in that game was fairly new to it. We went through a campaign that lasted for a good six years or so. People parted ways here and there and we have so many loose ends that I would love with all my heart to know what happens!

Do you have a favorite class or character type or do you like to change things up?

My very first character was a halfling rogue, which was just the best. I would default to play that in any game. But my latest enjoyment has come from playing goblins. These sneaky, stinky little creatures make the game so much fun. I love doing acrobatic attacks or trying to find other ways to solve problems that are not just hitting things. If I’m not playing tiny, sneaky creatures, it’ll maybe be a very robust and strong creature instead. I enjoy playing at either end of the scale.



(Select to view)

What’s your current game?

I’m DMing a lunchtime game for a few of my coworkers. Anna [Vo] and Trish [Yochum] had never played D&D before, while Kate [Irwin] and David [Gershman] have, so it’s been a great mix. Anna and Trish had an unusual introduction with me being a new DM, but it’s been fun because we’re all learning together. I’m also lucky to work with amazing storytellers and seasoned DMs who are very supportive of those trying out the seat behind the screen for the first time. Richard Whitters and Adam Lee often give me “DM Bootcamp” pointers, which as you can imagine are hilarious gems of inspiration procured through many years of experience. I have big plans for the game but the time just flies by when you’re sitting

around with friends doing silly stuff.

I believe it was Pat Rothfuss at D&D Live 2019 who said it's not about playing, it's about the time you spend at the table with people you like.

That's so sweet. Humans are social creatures. We learn and grow from being around other people and it helps if we enjoy being around them. That storytelling aspect is a huge piece of what makes us human. Passing down information and building amazing stories to remember is so essential.

You've been at Wizards of the Coast across a number of different roles. How did you first get the job there?

I was born and raised in Hawaii but came to college in Seattle and ended up working at a toy distribution company called Toymith in Auburn, Washington. I worked on packaging and graphic design, and it was a very good start out of college. A photographer who used to work at Toymith got a job at Wizards and told me about an opening. I gave it a go and was very excited that they hired me.



(Select to view)

What's your day-to-day schedule like? Do you juggle multiple things or work on one project before moving onto something else?

I work on a number of different projects that range from the TRPG books to marketing assets to digital frames people might need for the

internet. I can try to focus on a big chunk of the TRPG and feel like it's relaxing to get to work on the concepting and the layout of the book, because it's this huge project you have to get into the zone for. But then there'll be lists of requests for other things here and there so it's pretty much a juggling game. I like that because it keeps you on your toes.

Do you work digitally or sketch and paint more traditionally?  
I love to use Adobe Illustrator just because it's very clean and you can resize everything to no end. But I do a lot of sketching and doodling using pencil and paper before I take it into Illustrator. I would love to be able to paint in the same style as all of these great artists we feature in our books because that work is so beautiful and mysterious. I'll dabble in watercolor and send postcards to my grandma. She's my best audience because she won't judge me.



(Select to view)

It seems your sense of fun gets to come out in a lot of the work that you do...

We have done Valentine's Day cards and Halloween cards and general Holiday greetings. Some of those concepts come from Bart [Carroll] or begin life as clever dad puns or cheesy jokes that pop around the office. There's a bottomless supply of those and I really enjoy getting to add humor to art because D&D encompasses a lot of



funny things that translate well into art.



(Select to view)

When it came to creating these amazing Extra Life T-shirts, did they swing by your desk and say, “This is totally in your wheelhouse.”

We’ve actually been doing Extra Life since 2013, but we didn’t make any swag back then. In the following years we made T-shirts and focused on that year’s big D&D theme—for **Storm King’s Thunder** we had a giant on there. We would try to make it cute to appeal to a youthful audience and that was totally my style.

This year we had a ton of different characters for *Baldur’s Gate: Descent Into Avernus*, including some great monsters and companions. I wanted to do a bunch of abyssal chickens but that might not have been the easiest thing for kids to latch onto. Bart had this amazing idea that we focus on Lulu the hollyphant and Slobberchops. They’re both great characters. Lulu has these little wings but is as chunky and strange as she is positive and hopeful. When I first started drawing her I realized that’s not something you normally see in Hell.

You also did the initial sketches for UltraPro’s Figurines of Adorable Power?

The first set was done with the help of Richard Whitters, and we worked together to chunk up some our monsters. He’s an incredible artist but can also do cute stuff.



Drawings for the Figurines of Adorable Power (Select to view)

What are you working on right now?

I'm currently laying out the *Dungeons & Dragons Vs. Rick & Morty* TRPG adventure and the writing is so good! It's hilarious, it's obscene—just like the show—and I'm a huge fan. Kate Welch and her team have put a lot of thought into it and it was super fun to overhear them brainstorm it in the office. I need spoilers! The box set includes a DM screen and artist Troy Little, who worked on the comic book, has created that. It looks so cool and I want to own one and use it.

Is there anything D&D related you'd love to work on that you haven't done yet?

It would be really fun to do either a youth or a kids' version of D&D or a monster game. I love creatures and I love our monsters no end, they're just the coolest things. You can look at them in so many different ways. Beasts might seem awful and crazy, but as a creator you can write stories that show them in a different light. So I'd love to do a project that involves our monsters and also shows kids how to solve problems or tell stories in a creative and fun way. Think of it as under-the-radar learning.



(Select to view)

You've been on Dungeons & Doodles a few times. What's it like to produce work under that kind of time pressure?

It's so much fun! But also humbling. Especially because I'm drawing alongside these talented and humorous artists. But the fun comes from having to think how would you make an infernal war machine out of a coffee pot? It's similar to the way DMs need to think on their feet and that's always a good thing to practice. It all intertwines.



(Select to view)

Is there anything you'd be too squeamish to draw?

I worked on the *Axis & Allies & Zombies* board game with Shelly Mazzanoble, which was a super fun, so it wouldn't be zombies. I don't mind goeey, creepy, weird stuff or things like spiders. But the one request I would hate would be to draw worms or caterpillars. I think it's the way they move—their little faces, their little legs.

Just thinking about them, I have goosebumps! I don't even like to Google search them. Thankfully, I tend to get requests such as, "What does torn skin look like?" or "Draw boils on this monster."

You can hear Emi Tanji discuss her work on Dungeons & Dragons

on the [Behold Her](#) podcast, connect with her on [Twitter](#) and help raise money for the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals via her [Extra Life](#) page.



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# Dungeons & Dragons

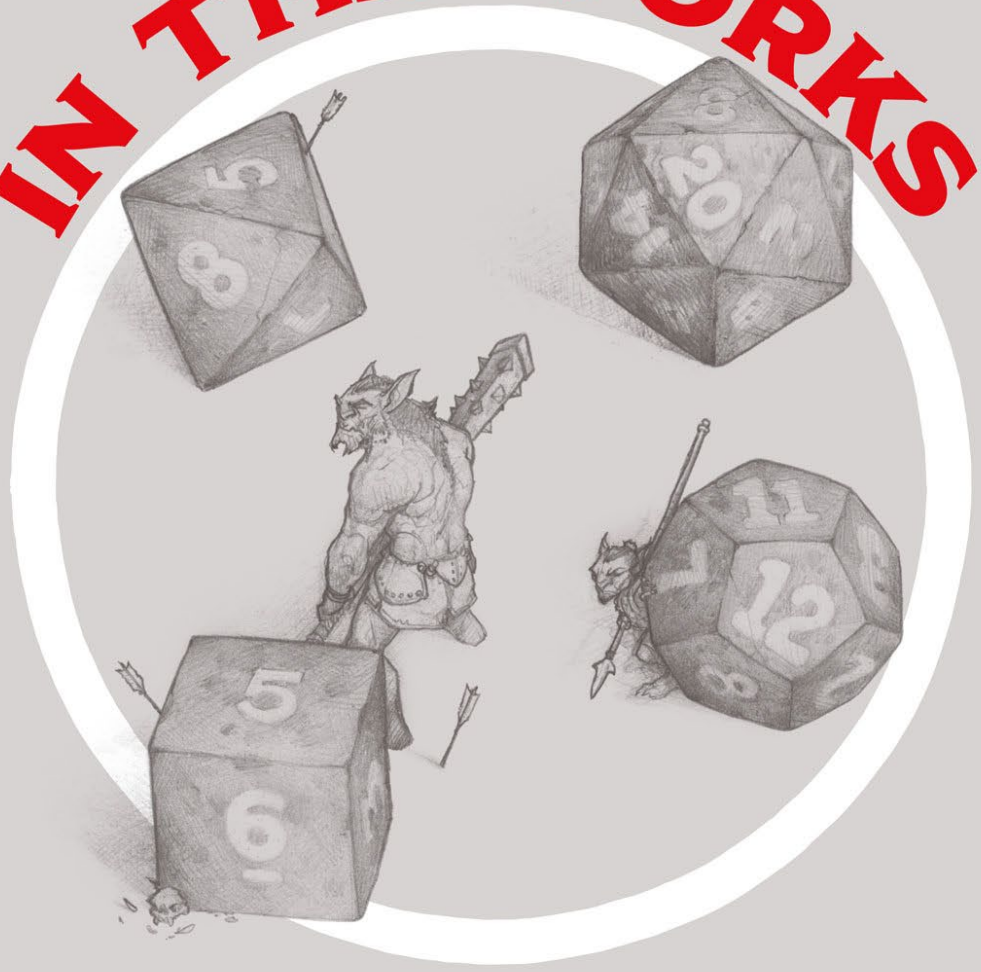


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# IN THE WORKS



# PREVIEWS

## IN THE WORKS



## Eberron: Rising From the Last War

It may have been spoiled a bit earlier this year (at the very end of D&D Live 2019), but “Project Tesla” is arriving in November to catapult you into the pulp fiction fantasy setting of Eberron! Noir-inspired mystery meets swashbuckling adventure in this war-torn world filled with magic-fueled technology, airships and lightning trains.

*Eberron: Rising from the Last War* offers everything players and Dungeon Masters need to play the world’s greatest roleplaying game in this setting, including an introductory adventure, easy-to-use locations for your own adventures, a host of monsters, and more.



Players can take advantage of sixteen new races and subraces, including being able to meld magic and invention as an artificer—the first official class to be released for fifth edition D&D since the *Player’s Handbook*. One new option is the group patron, which provides a connected origin for a group of characters to help flesh out the backgrounds for the whole party.

“We developed the group patron mechanic from scratch for this book,” Jeremy Crawford tells

*Dragon+*. “We’ve been talking for a while about this idea that people love backgrounds in fifth edition and wouldn’t it be cool if there was a background for the entire group of adventurers. Most D&D campaigns start out with the group trying to figure out how those characters came together.

“We feel the group patron approach gives you a very clear way to answer that question of why are we adventuring together. We’re together because we all work for the same university, or we’re all reporters for this particular newspaper, or we were all on the same military course. Eberron is the perfect world for us to explore this notion because it’s a pre-modern world and it has organizations such as newspapers and detective agencies—or as they’re called in Eberron ‘inquisitive agencies’. We thought it would be fun to give adventurers this unifying professional connection.”

*Eberron: Rising from the Last War* contains broad options for group patrons, with one example for each of those options being fleshed out in the book. Players and DMs will be able to use the sample option provided or take one of those general group patron categories and develop their own.

“The examples we provide in this book are Eberron specific, but people could take those broad categories and apply them to other worlds. One of the group patrons you can pick is a crime syndicate and we give you advice on how that might work. That advice would work for any D&D world but then we dive specifically into what it means for you to be a part of a gang in Eberron called the Boromar Clan and how that might shape your entire campaign.

“Even though the group patron is essentially a group background it does not replace your individual background, it works in addition to that character background. Each player is able to choose a background from the *Player’s Handbook* or another source and then the whole party can have one of these group patrons.”

Will Eberron enter a prosperous new age or will the shadow of war descend once again? Will you survive the adventures in the Mournland or will the horrific monsters born from Eberron’s wars add your body to this mist-cloaked, corpse-littered land? Pick up a copy with the standard cover in any retailer or find the alternate



cover by Vance Kelly (*Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*' alt cover) in game stores and find out!

*Eberron: Rising from the Last War* is released on November 19, 2019 with an MSRP of \$49.95 and you can pre-order it now at your [local game store](#), book stores such as [Barnes & Noble](#), or online at retailers such as [Amazon](#).

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## IN THE WORKS

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# Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus

Break out your handbaskets, we're going to Hell! At *D&D Live 2019: The Descent*, the next major campaign storyline for Dungeons & Dragons was announced—*Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*. And while it's known at this point that adventurers start in Baldur's Gate before traveling to the first of Hell's nine layers, it's now time to offer a few more details of the story.

In brief: As the adventure opens, the holy city of Elturel has disappeared from the Forgotten Realms and descended into Avernus. This event came about as the result of Avernus's ruler, Zariel, capturing cities and using their citizens as fodder in the ongoing conflict between demons and devils known as the Blood War.

Next on Zariel's list of cities is Elturel's neighbor, Baldur's Gate. Our heroes must descend into Avernus, save Elturel from certain destruction, and prevent a similar fate from befalling Baldur's Gate.

But before we get started... let's unpack a few of these names, shall we?

## What is Avernus?

Every shred of evil is used in the Nine Hells, and each layer specializes in some way to accommodate and exploit the vices and weaknesses of mortals. The devils of Avernus—the first layer of the Nine Hells—seek to exploit pride and wrath, promising the aggrieved, enraged, and egotistical the power to fulfill their darkest obsessions. Such fulfillment, however, comes at a price.

Anyone entering Avernus finds a battlefield unlike any other in existence. Evidence of past carnage—such as the ruins of enormous war machines and fields of bleached bones—stretches across the horizon. Pieces of cities stolen from other planes, tiny remnants of Avernus's lost beauty, evidence of destroyed celestial armies, and tombs of ancient travelers all dot the Avernian wasteland. Through it all, the River Styx winds its way across the plane as knots of demons and devils skirmish along its fetid banks.

Avernus was not always the blasted, war-torn battlefield it is today. Long ago, it was a plane of lush gardens and bucolic beauty created by Asmodeus to tempt mortals. The intrusion of the River Styx followed by endless waves of slaving demons destroyed this paradise.

Now Avernus serves as the front line of the Blood War. Demons from the Abyss use the River Styx to enter Avernus, where they hurl themselves against infernal legions of devils. Most of these devils serve Zariel, though other Lords of the Nine send forces here to help repel the demonic invaders.

## What is the Blood War?

The Blood War refers to the great clash between the evil forces of chaos and law—or put another way, the demons and devils duking things out in perpetual conflict.

We discussed the Blood War more fully in *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*, which you can read here:

[DOWNLOAD THE PDF](#)

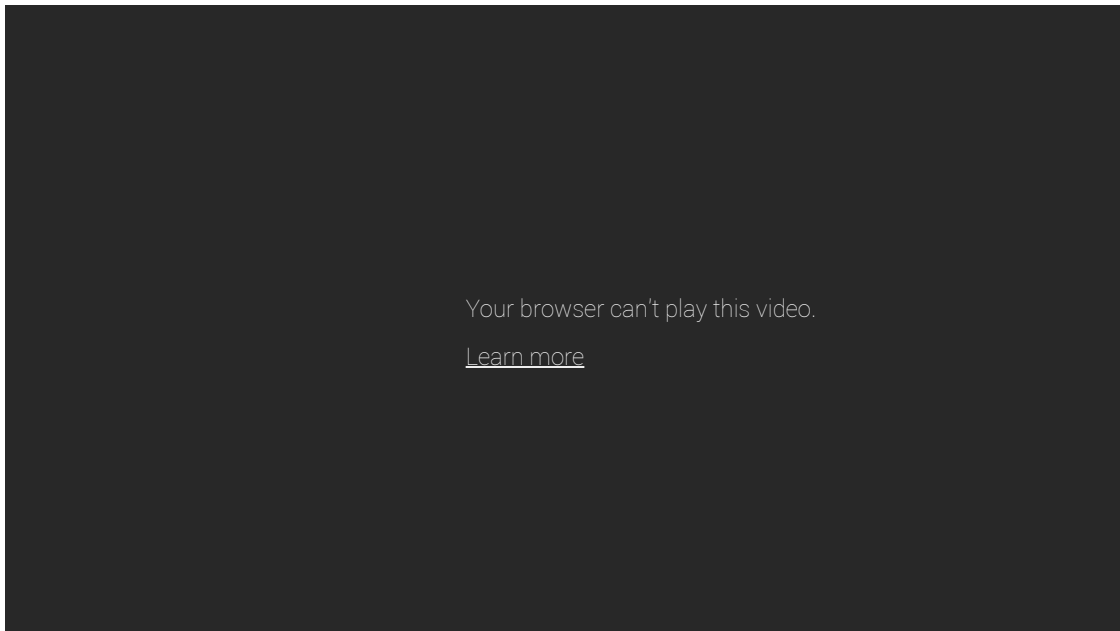
## Who is Zariel?

Many years prior to Elturel's unholy descent, the angel Zariel chastised her peers on the plane of Mount Celestia for not getting involved in the Blood War. She felt that it was the responsibility of the angelic host to destroy evil in the multiverse, rather than stand back and watch demons and devils annihilate one another, destroying vast swaths of the multiverse in the process. In defiance of her superiors, Zariel left Mount Celestia and went to the city of Elturel,

where she rallied an army of warriors and trained them to fight in the Blood War. She promised them that when they were ready, she would lead them into battle on Avernus.

When the time came, Zariel led her army out of Elturel amid a throng of cheering well-wishers and proud citizens. In an epic charge known as the Ride, Zariel's army entered Avernus and took the fight to the archdevil Bel and his infernal legions. Many of Zariel's warriors fought bravely, but for others, the horrors of the Nine Hells proved too great. They fled back through the portal, sealing it behind them and never revealing their shameful retreat and betrayal. The Hellriders, as they were called, would wear this badge of shame to the grave.

Zariel lost more than her army on Avernus. She also lost a hand, which was severed in battle. As her sword fell to the ground, Zariel ordered Yael, her most devoted general, to take the weapon and hide it, so that the devils would not destroy or corrupt it. Yael took the sword and fled, along with Zariel's faithful hollyphant companion, Lulu. Zariel's other two generals, Haruman and Olanthus, refused to leave Zariel's side. All three were captured and sent to Nessus, the lowest of the Nine Hells.



There, Zariel was brought before Asmodeus, who welcomed her with open arms.

Asmodeus, as Lord of the Nine, commended Zariel for her battle

proWess and the strength of her convictions. He offered her rulership of Avernus, much to Bel's chagrin. By swearing fealty to Asmodeus and the Nine Hells, Zariel could bring her rage to bear against the demons and continue to fight in the Blood War, with legions of devils under her command. Zariel accepted Asmodeus's terms, completing her fall from grace. Haruman followed his master into damnation willingly and was transformed into a narzugon devil, while Olanthius, who took his own life rather than bow before Asmodeus, was brought back to serve as a death knight under Zariel's burning gaze.

You can access all of D&D Beyond's videos regarding *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus*:

## WATCH

*Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* releases September 17, 2019 with an MSRP of \$49.95. An alternative art cover with a distinctive design and soft-touch finish will also be available exclusively in game stores.

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## CHAPTER 1: THE BLOOD WAR

**T**HROUGHOUT HISTORY, THE TEEMING HORDES of the Abyss and the strictly regimented legions of the Nine Hells have battled for supremacy in the cosmos. In the mortal world, the scant few scholars, arcanists, and adventurers who know the conflict for what it is refer to it as the Blood War.

The fighting takes place across the Lower Planes, on the Material Plane, and anywhere else that demons and devils might congregate. From time to time, demons spill out of the Abyss to invade Avernus, the uppermost layer of the Nine Hells. While the devils defend their home turf, they also make strikes against locations in the Abyss. Although the intensity of the conflict waxes and wanes, and the front lines of the war can shift drastically, a moment never goes by when demons and devils aren't battling each other somewhere in the multiverse.

### THE GREAT DANCE

WE MEASURE OURSELVES BY THOSE WE FIGHT, AND MY *company* faces the greatest threat to the cosmos.

—Veritus Wrath, commander, Flawless Execution

The battle lines in the Blood War undulate like a writhing snake. Each time one side gains an advantage, invariably its lines weaken somewhere else.

Demons enter the Nine Hells by following the River Styx from the Abyss into Avernus. By hiring skilled merenloth pilots to navigate the river, a demon lord can transport an invasion force of enormous size.

Mimicking a complex dance, the two sides shift their attacks and trade positions with each passing day. About once every thousand years, the demons close in on the lower reaches of the Styx and portals leading deeper into the Hells. Invariably, the legions of the Nine Hells boil up from below to repel the invaders out of Avernus, back to the juncture where the Styx enters the Hells. This drive by the devils attracts the attention of more demons from the Abyss, which pushes the front line back into Avernus. The process repeats itself time and time again.

To the good fortune of the rest of the multiverse, almost all the battles in the Blood War take place in the Abyss and the Nine Hells. Whether by cosmic chance or the design of some unknown power, the dark waters of the Styx provide passage between the two planes, but pathways to other realms are at best fleeting and unreliable. Despite the difficulty of escaping the Lower Planes, combatants on both sides find their way to the Material Plane and other realms from time to time. Although the conflicts on these other planes are little more than skirmishes in the Blood War, even a small number of demons and devils can wreak havoc and bring destruction wherever they see fit to do battle.

## MORTALS AND MINIONS

Devils and demons are far from the only combatants in the Blood War. Both sides exploit the Material Plane's most abundant resource—mortal creatures, whose bodies and souls are both useful to the cause.

Devils constantly strive to recruit mortals into their ranks by offering them rewards in return for their service. While they live, these cultists carry out the wishes of their archdevil masters, whether raiding an enemy outpost or gathering more members for the cult. When a cultist dies, its soul emerges in the Nine Hells and becomes another of the Blood War's immortal soldiers. Most of the evil souls consigned to an afterlife in the Nine Hells become lemures, which make up the vast majority of the hellish forces, but some mortal recruits who willingly accept a contract offer from a powerful devil can arrive as a lesser devil.

Demons generally have no regard for mortal souls and do not solicit them, but living creatures do have their uses. Groups of corrupted cultists dedicated to one of the demon lords exist all across the realms of the material world. For as long as these mortals do the bidding of their lord, they are allowed to live. From a demon's perspective, all other living creatures are nothing more than sheep ripe for slaughter, and demonic cultists share this view. These fanatics don't hesitate to slay other mortals if given the chance—and if their victims happen to be in league with devils, so much the better.

A casual observer might suppose that two forces of evil bent on exterminating each other would be an advantageous situation for the forces of good, but the combatants in the Blood War have no regard for collateral damage—and on the Material Plane, they can cause a lot of it. If agents of Asmodeus discover a thriving demon cult in a city, they might deal with the threat by starting a fire that not only destroys the cult but burns through several neighborhoods and kills hundreds of innocents. A demon might unleash a plague to kill every person in a town, just for the sake of claiming from its library an old book containing a map to a lost artifact. The fiends on both sides of the Blood War take the path of least resistance to their goals, heedless of consequences that don't affect them.

### AGENTS OF TREACHERY

Both sides in the Blood War employ spies and soldiers drawn from the ranks of other evil creatures of the planes. The devils are generally more successful at this tactic because of the discipline they can bring to bear on these ostensible allies. Even so, powerful, intelligent

*There are many theories about why it is called the Blood War, but I believe it is because the branches of the River Styx act like blood vessels that circulate the conflict throughout the Lower Planes.*

demon lords such as Graz'zt can also force their agents to do their bidding under threat of annihilation.

As creatures that don't favor either cause, because they care nothing for the philosophical concerns of law and chaos, other fiends including incubi, succubi, and night hags work for whichever side offers the best compensation. Demons use them as insurrectionists in the Nine Hells, inciting rebellion and defiance. The devils employ such creatures as scouts, who use their magic and other abilities to navigate the Abyss and gain intelligence about the demons' activities. Adventurers hired by an agent of the Nine Hells to make a foray into the Abyss are customarily guided by such a mercenary.

### THE SEARCH FOR SECRETS

The Blood War has all the characteristics of an eternal stalemate, in part because the two sides are so familiar with each other. Every time the Abyss belches forth some new variety of horror, the disciplined and well-trained legions of the Nine Hells reorganize, rally, and counterattack. The devils continually dream up variations on their attack strategies, only to be checked by the overwhelming chaotic force of the Abyss. Little true advancement occurs under the angry red sky of Avernus or in any other realm where the forces clash.

The leaders of each side recognize that the introduction of some unexpected factor could permanently affect the balance of power. Accordingly, demons and devils constantly send their agents across the planes in search of artifacts, powerful creatures to recruit, and other resources that could lead to a key advantage in the war. Adventurers of great repute might get involved in such a quest, either as unwitting pawns or as an independent force pursuing its own ends.

### COSMIC BATTLEFIELD

The Blood War rages along the length of the River Styx. Direct confrontations between demons and devils erupt along its banks, making any of the Lower Planes the Styx touches a potential battleground.

The devils view fighting demons on Avernus as a net benefit for their cause. Although most devils slain there are destroyed forever, ready access to supplies and support from the Nine Hells tilts the tide heavily against in-

#### SAILING THE STYX

The River Styx frustrates every attempt to map it or predict its course. Although anyone can try to navigate it, only merrenoloths, the yugoloth ferrymen of the Styx, can faultlessly negotiate the Styx's treacherous waters. For a price, merrenoloths will carry anyone safely and swiftly across planar boundaries. The greater the distance and the more perilous the passengers to be ferried, the higher the price.

Getting lost while sailing the Styx isn't the only danger the river presents. Merely tasting or touching its waters causes most creatures to become stupefied, and drinking fully or being immersed for too long can render that condition permanent, robbing a creature of all its memories. Fiends don't fear being momentarily exposed to the Styx, but—with the notable exception of hydroloths, merrenoloths, and amnizus—even they can't retain their memories if they drink from the River Styx or swim for too long in its waters.



vading demons. Also, the prospect of a permanent death compels the devils fighting on Avernus to maintain the utmost readiness and coordination. Wounded devils retreat, knowing that fresh reinforcements can continue the fight. Hordes of lemures, devils that are permanently destroyed only if subjected to holy energies, are used to blunt demonic incursions. The terrain of Avernus is thoroughly mapped and festooned with ambush points, strongholds, and other defensive measures.

More important, demons that are slain and sent back to the Abyss return to their chaotic wanderings in that realm. A demon lord is thus hard pressed to keep a horde cohesive as it takes casualties. If the devils extended a tenacious defense out to the planes beyond Avernus, they could keep the demons away from Hell's doorstep, but such a strategy would place a great strain on supplies, reinforcements, and unit integrity. Although the devils killed in such places would recover, their weapons, armor, and other materials would remain lost.

## THE DEVILISH POINT OF VIEW

MY LEGIONS ARE THE ONLY THING STANDING BETWEEN your precious Seven Heavens and the bottomless hunger of the Abyss. I did not fall into the clutches of evil. I rose to shoulder a cosmic burden.

—Zariel, Archduchess of Avernus,  
former angel of Celestia

Although the basic facts of the Blood War aren't subject to debate, a host of theories exist that attempt to explain why the conflict erupted in the first place.

The devils fight as a matter of pride mixed with burning resentment for a cosmic order that refuses to acknowledge their role as overseers of the multiverse.

### LEGIONS OF THE DAMNED

Most of the forces of the Nine Hells are grouped into three types of legions that each play a role in repelling the invading demons. Incompetent or weak devils fill out the dreg legions, composed mainly of hordes of lemures and nupperibos. They are deployed as a delaying tactic, serving as fodder to slow down an advancing horde of demons while sword legions organize their counterattacks and shield legions establish their defenses. Each legion within a category has a distinctive, fearsome-sounding name in the Infernal tongue. When translated into Common, these names are often descriptive of the legion's status or battle-worthiness, such as the ones given below.

**Dreg Legions.** Bugs in the System, Momentary Lapse of Progress, Casualties Imminent, Last in Line for Healing, Not Worth the Effort

**Shield Legions.** Moment of Silence, Welcome to the Hells, Pleased to Meet You, Front toward Enemy, End of the Line

**Sword Legions.** Flawless Execution, Damned Good, The Hanging Blade, Inevitable Outcome, A Taste for Carnage

To the devils' way of thinking, the Nine Hells are the front line in the demons' war against all of creation, and the fate of the cosmos depends on the devils' ability to blunt the invasion and send the demons back to the Abyss.

In fact, devils believe that the demons would have long ago swept across the multiverse but for the unflinching rule of law that underlies the actions of the infernal leaders and their armies. If necessary, a general must not hesitate to sacrifice entire legions to stall an enemy advance or punch a hole through an enemy phalanx. Iron discipline combined with a ruthless focus on victory at any cost is what fuels the devils' war machine.

Every devil takes a grim pride in its service in the Blood War. Talk to one for a short time, and it will reveal



the scars earned during its time in Avernus and tell tales of the great battles it has seen. Talk to one for a little longer, and it will inform you that you are alive only because of the devils' heroic efforts. If there was truly justice in the world, it would tell you, the multiverse would bend its knee to the Nine Hells in thanks for the devils' role in preserving the cosmos.

## THE DEMONIC POINT OF VIEW

WHY DO WE DESCEND UPON THE DOMAIN OF OUR HATED enemies? Because that's where the fighting is!

—Zaadaaak, demon of the Abyss

Most other creatures believe demons to be little more than mindless engines of destruction and violence. If that supposition were true, the Blood War should have ended long ago, since the tactical and strategic genius of the archdevils would have made quick work of the hordes that erupt from the Abyss. In fact, even though demons are quintessentially chaotic, their evilness combines with that outlook to produce a fiendish, subtle shrewdness. Demon lords and other powerful entities exert control over their armies that enables the forces to accomplish goals that would be beyond the capabilities of a leaderless mob. To the demons that have intelligence enough to appreciate their role in it, the Blood War offers an endless source of diversion underscored by resentment of a cosmic order that refuses to admit their superiority.

As the devils have surmised, the demons invade Avernus because it is easily accessible from the Abyss. But some sages and demonologists maintain that even if that were not the case, the Nine Hells would still be the demons' prime target. If the demons sent out a large force to invade a different plane, this theory holds, the devils would be able to marshal allies from across all the planes to rise up against the Abyss and end its threat forever. Instead, as long as the demons focus most of

### YUGOLOTHS: FICKLE ALLIES

Yugoloths are major players on both sides of the Blood War. The death of a yugoloth is meaningless when it occurs in the Abyss or the Nine Hells, and thus these mercenaries freely give their all in any battle even when it means fighting other yugoloths. Demons and devils both know that a yugoloth's loyalty is constantly for sale—even during a conflict on the battlefield—and a yugoloth never agrees to a contract that prohibits it from seeking a better offer. This set of circumstances prompts hellish and abyssal armies to carry war chests with them in the hope of buying the services of the yugoloths on the other side. The war chests themselves thus become highly prized targets, which in turn leads to protective measures, such as valuables hidden in *bags of holding* or empty treasure containers used to lure the enemy into a trap.

Regardless of the side that hires them, yugoloths almost never fight on their home plane of Gehenna despite the fact that both sides sometimes traverse it and many battles of the Blood War are fought there. A yugoloth killed in Gehenna can't be restored to life except through an exceptional ritual, so the sums required to entice one to fight on its home plane are astronomical ... and making such a bargain always draws the attention of the ultroloths.

*The planes exist in a precarious state. A seemingly small event could echo across the worlds and tip the Balance. My task is to keep a finger on each end of the scales, ensuring it never sways too violently.*

their efforts on the doorstep of the Nine Hells, realms such as the Seven Heavens and Bytopia are loath to commit aid to defend a plane that is inimical to everything they stand for by aiding the devils directly.

Therefore, the demons assault the Nine Hells over and over not only because it is the greatest threat to their dominion, but also because striking in force anywhere else would play into the devils' hands.

## THE BALANCE

The demons and the devils both foresee their own versions of the future of the multiverse—a cosmos in which one side or the other triumphs in the Blood War and rules for the rest of eternity. A third point of view exists, held by those who take both sides at their word and strive to make sure that neither outcome ever comes to pass.

The adherents of this viewpoint refer to the concept they espouse as the Balance, and they seek to maintain equilibrium across the cosmos above all. Mordenkainen and his compatriots are among its most notable devotees. Since a true appreciation of the Balance and its implications requires a grasp of events on a cosmic level, very few people or entities fully embrace the idea. Those few, however, make up a formidable force that can mix martial and magical power to keep the extremists of the Blood War in check.

To an outside observer, a disciple of the Balance might act cruelly or heartlessly one day, and benevolent and caring the next. A follower might aid in consigning one city to domination by a devil cult while driving demonic cultists from another. For the sake of the Balance, the cosmos must remain in a static state where neither demon nor devil can permanently gain the upper hand.

Keepers of the Balance sometimes resort to strategies that seem inexplicable to those who don't grasp the whole situation. A crusading paladin might be discouraged from seeking out and defeating Demogorgon, because doing so could weaken the Abyss enough to allow the forces of the Nine Hells to gain a firm foothold there. An adherent of the Balance might vie with a great arcanist as both search for knowledge of a ritual that would cripple Asmodeus for a short time. The arcanist correctly believes that performing the ritual would free a world of the Material Plane from the devils' taint, but doesn't appreciate that it also would bring a grievous setback to the forces that had been keeping the demons from overrunning Avernus.

Those who vow to maintain the Balance make enemies wherever they go, because their full reasons for acting as they do aren't always apparent. The fact that some of these adherents embrace the Balance to further their personal quests for power makes it impossible to count on them as allies with complete certainty.

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## D&D Extra Life: Charity Apparel

It's the D&D team's seventh year taking part in Extra Life, the charity supporting Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. And while the official Extra Life Game Day takes place later this year (on Saturday November 2, 2019), we're kicking things off now so you can **get involved!**

Events have already taken place at San Diego Comic Con and the D&D Founder's & Legends event. In addition, our latest round of apparel went live at **CustomInk** with an initial design featuring Lulu the hollyphant and Jezebel the quasit.

Curious about who exactly Lulu and Jezebel are (and why they hate each other so much)? As might be expected, both derive from *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus*.



Who is Jezebel?

During the course of the adventure, characters are likely to travel to Candlekeep—the fortress perched on a spur of rock overlooking the Sea of Swords which boasts one of the finest libraries in Faerûn.

It's here that information may be obtained from Sylvira Savikas, a tiefling archmage, who's one of Candlekeep's foremost sages and specializes in knowledge pertaining to the Outer Planes. Her quasit familiar, Jezebel, adds just the right amount of mischief and chaos to her life.

When first met, Sylvira presents the following figure:

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The walls of this circular tower chamber are punctuated by arched windows that are currently shuttered. Bookcases filled with eldritch volumes stand between the windows, while tables are crowded with specimen jars, alchemical equipment, and other clutter. Engraved into the floor of the chamber is a large, nine-pointed star.

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A middle-aged tiefling dressed in wizardly robes stands by one of the windows, caught in a fugue of intense contemplation. Perched on the corner of a table nearby is a spindly little demon with warty green skin, buggy eyes, thin black horns, and a whip-like tail.

“I can't tell you how pleased I am to see you,” says the tiefling.  
“What have you brought me?”

## Who is Lulu?

While studying a portal to the Nine Hells, Sylvira came upon Lulu the hollyphant and befriended her. Lulu once served as Zariel's faithful companion (and occasional mount, as hollyphants are able to change size). Lulu “suffered a different fate and did not go with Zariel on her dark path,” Chris Perkins reveals in his video interview with D&D Beyond, “and now has an opportunity to try to help her former friend find redemption.”



After leaving Avernus, Lulu stayed with Sylvira at Candlekeep for a while... however, Lulu did not get along with Sylvira's quasis familiar, Jezebel. As such, Sylvira decided that the hollyphant would make a better companion for a neighboring wizard, given his eccentricity and good nature:

One level down, you see a cluttered chamber illuminated by various objects upon which continual flame spells have been cast. Scurrying around the room is an otter dressed in a tiny red cassock. The otter mumbles to itself in Common, mentioning something about a tuning fork. Suddenly, it takes notice of you and stands upright. "Lulu! Wake up! Our guests have arrived!"

At the sound of her name, a small elephant with golden fur appears from under a pile of blankets near a table strewn with alchemical

equipment. The elephant takes to the air on feathery wings and lets out a pleasing trumpet sound.

## Hollyphants

Hollyphants are gentle, stalwart creatures native to the Upper Planes. Good-aligned deities and angels use them as messengers and helpers. Hollyphants treasure friendship and honesty.

A hollyphant looks like a miniature elephant with luminous gold fur and small, rapidly fluttering wings that not only hold it aloft but also propel it at great speed. Although kind, a hollyphant won't bear witness to an evil act without punishing the malefactor. Its pearlescent tusks are far from formidable, but it can unleash trumpet blasts from its trunk that can deafen creatures or engulf evildoers in radiant sparkles of positive energy. A hollyphant is also blessed with powerful innate magic to help it combat evil and protect its friends.

As a hollyphant, friendship is important to Lulu in ways both physical and spiritual. Her growing friendship with the characters causes the hollyphant to remember things long forgotten.

Hollyphants originally appeared in the first edition *Monster Manual* 2:

[LEARN MORE](#)

And you can take a look at their current stats for the game:

[LEARN MORE](#)



## Who is Slobberchops?

While Lulu and Jezebel graced our first Extra Life shirt design for 2019, the second (also appearing on this issue's cover) featured a certain winged cat. We speak with designer Emi Tanji earlier in the issue about Slobberchops, described in the *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus* sourcebook as a mean-looking tressym with a bobtail and numerous battle scars.

## Tressym

Tressym are intelligent felines thought to be the results of wizardly experimentation. They are known to form strong friendships with humanoids, particularly rangers and wizards. Tressym feed on small rodents, birds, and insects, stalking and pouncing on prey as normal cats do, but with the added advantage of flight; and while tressym get along well with others of their kind, they rarely lair or hunt together.

Tressym peacefully ignore bats, faerie dragons, and the like, but they hate stirges and evil flying monsters such as manticores.

They also enjoy teasing dogs.

Interested in your own tressym? On [Bart Carroll's Extra Life page](#), donation rewards include an AL cert for one of your very own, albeit a rather odd version!



Your browser can't play this video.

[Learn more](#)

Please consider joining our fundraising activities by taking part in Extra Life 2019! The D&D Team page **is live now** and apparel can be found at **CustomInk**. In addition, look for adventure material which supports the charity on the DMs Guild, including the **Turtle Package** and *Lost Laboratory of Kwalish!*

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# Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus Platinum Edition

**WARNING:** May include light spoilers for *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*.

“It sounds like a lot!” Matthew Lillard tells *Dragon+* as he exclusively reveals the full contents of Beagle & Grimm’s latest Platinum Edition box set—and he’s not kidding. The high-end company is building on its previous premium D&D releases by responding to feedback from its fans.

“We’ve broken *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* down into multiple books in the same way we did with *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*, as people really appreciated that and felt it was a helpful way to run the adventure,” says Bill Rehor, co-founder of Beadle & Grimm’s Pandemonium Warehouse.

“We’ve also got another big set of encounter cards as DMs really love these as a way of sharing monsters in-game. And since Avernus is all demons and devils the art on those is amazing.”





(Select to view)

Alongside the other staples of a Beadle & Grimm’s release, which include bonus campaign content, pre-generated characters with rounded-out backstories and well-crafted jewelry, the team has looked to go even further with its second Platinum Edition.

“A lot of the items in Avernus are brand new to the D&D world because they’re specific to the Nine Hells, so we’ve put together a set of five-inch by five-inch magic item cards. They’re big and pretty and include the full description of the item so a player can actually hold the card and learn everything about an item when they find it,” says Rehor.

“We’ve also got a few certificates provided by the **Adventurers League** that are really fun. They came up with three options so it’s a little more variable and depending on which path the characters take they might end up with a different certificate.”

### Collector’s Edition

While much of the joy of purchasing a Platinum Edition box set lies in the extra levels of immersion its contents bring to your game, there is also a collector’s element to owning one. The Beadle & Grimm’s staff have seen a lot of their pins and other jewelry items being worn at conventions, but they also recognize that people may want to

guarantee keeping their box set complete.

“The good thing about the badges is that we sell them on our website individually so if you want to keep your new set intact and also wear a Harpers pin at Gen Con you can do that,” says Rehor. “And one of the first things that happens to the party in *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* is they get conscripted into the Flaming Fist. There's a small Flaming Fist badge in the box and some DMs will be happy to hand it around and show that to the players while others will want every person at the table to be able to wear it. If they do, they can come to the website and buy enough for the whole party.”



Rehor says it's important for a Platinum Edition to maintain its exclusivity beyond those wearable items, which is why not every item can be purchased separately online. Those key elements which can only be owned by buying a box set are designed to offer some of the most valuable gameplay experiences in the adventure.

“We've made a gorgeous infernal contract as that's a cornerstone of the adventure and it can be unfurled for dramatic effect,” Rehor says as Lillard does just that, the metallic plates covered in abyssal marks and connected by chains clanking as they unfold. “Things like that aren't sold outside of the box.”

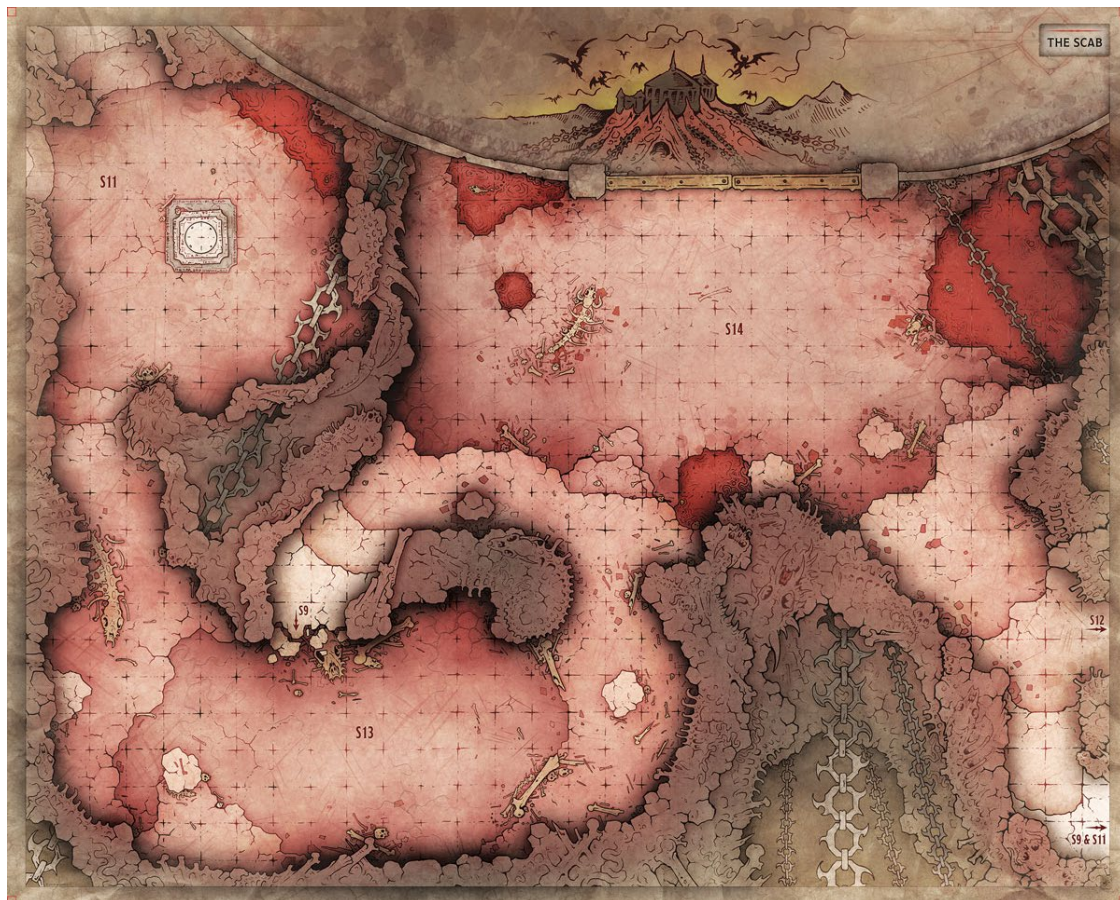
Similarly impressive in this set is the soul coin. Wizards of the Coast handed soul coins out at *D&D Live 2019: The Descent* and their heft and design were impressive. Beadle & Grimm's soul coin has taken

that idea and turned it all the way up to 11.

“These coins are supposed to be massive, terrifying things and the very way they feel lets you know how important one is. We needed our coin to have that effect when the DM hands it to you,” says Rehor. “And if you look really closely on one side you can see there’s a face peering back at you because every coin traps the soul of a mortal being.”

#### Commence Battle

Another familiar feature in the company’s Platinum Edition box sets are battle maps. Since the campaign for *Baldur’s Gate: Descent Into Avernus* takes place in the midst of the endless Blood War between demons and devils it was a chance for Beadle & Grimm’s to really focus on those.



(Select to view)

“Avernus has a lot of wild, exciting settings that are made for big battles and we have a huge set of maps in this set,” says Rehor. “Since so much of the adventure takes place in this vast hellscape we also wanted to create a reusable map a DM can lay out in a moment’s

notice for any encounter. So we've printed a generic hellscape map and created terrain pieces that will stick to it.

“These include everything from piles of bones to pools of blood and gaping chasms. They come in all different sizes so a DM can create a whole new terrain every time they need to and they can be reused over and over again for new hellsapes.”

One component the team has revised in this new Platinum Edition is the inclusion of minifigures. That decision followed customer feedback from its *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* release and the team were willing to take that on board.

“Some people felt they shouldn't be getting items in a Platinum box they could buy in a store, and while I don't totally agree I can see that's not an unfair assessment for this kind of product,” Rehor says, confirming that the team's response has been to go bigger and better.

“We had the opportunity to get a version of the massive infernal war machine from WizKids and make it unique to our box. It's not the same one you'll find in the stores so that seemed like a perfect fit. And the first time you set it down next to your players' figures they'll realize just how massive this thing is.”



(Select to view)

### Drive Angry

Players will hopefully get the chance to pilot numerous vehicles as they tear across the hellscape, upgrading them as they go or acquiring ever larger infernal war machines to take on the forces of the Nine Hells. Once again, the Platinum Edition is able to help DMs and players make the most of those options.

“The infernal war machines play an important part in this campaign and come with a whole set of rules that can be used to run encounters,” says Jon Ciccolini, co-founder of Beadle & Grimm’s Pandemonium Warehouse. “One cool thing we did is pull the rules out of the book to create a little handout for easy reference.

“We included pre-generated stat sheets for the machines that are



initially a part of the adventure. But we also want the DM and the players to feel empowered to create their own infernal war machine so there's a fillable option where they can actually build their very own machine with all the available choices in front of them," adds Rehor.

Although the infernal war machine was supposed to be the only tabletop figure included in the box set, fans of minifigures will still get their fix thanks to the efforts of Gale Force Nine. The company has created a pair of figures to celebrate the characters of Beadle and Grimm themselves.

"It has nothing to do with Avernus, we just think it's fun ["And we're narcissists," jokes Lillard] but since Gale Force 9 has made Beadle and Grimm figures and is selling them as a set we're going to be putting those into our box as a thank you to the people who buy this Platinum Edition," reveals Rehor.

Hollyphant-astic

If you thought dropping that beast of an infernal war machine on your tabletop would wow your players, prepare to have them gasp with joy at another addition. Beadle & Grimm were enchanted enough by the companions in the *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* sourcebook to turn one of them into a plushy.

"One of those companions is an hollyphant, a little flying elephant creature that follows the party



around on their travels. Lulu is very cute and very sweet, which makes a nice contrast to the hellscape you find yourselves in. We created this pint-size plushy that the DM can utilize to help propel that character forward,” explains Lillard. “We’re excited to include something that is so different as ideally we want every box to try to keep pushing the

boundaries and provide new, surprising things for players.”

“I also think it helps keep Lulu present as a character,” adds Rehor. “It’s sometimes easy to forget about party companions so it’s nice to have that physical reminder sitting there at the table.”

The possibility that Lulu may provide some much-needed comfort during a tough session has also not been lost on Beadle & Grimm’s founders. “It’s something to snuggle when you’re completely terrified or you’re left crying because you’ve lost your soul,” says Lillard, while Rehor adds, “At least if you’ve been buried in a tower made out of dried blood, you can cuddle Lulu.”

Digi-evolve

Physical enhancements aren’t the only bonuses DMs can expect in the upcoming Platinum Edition. Beadle & Grimm’s has once again partnered with **D&D Beyond** to give its fans access to all of the materials from *Baldur’s Gate: Descent Into Avernus* on that digital platform. Meanwhile, a new digital partner is helping them add an extra layer of immersion to playing sessions thanks to a redeemable code.

“**Syrinscape** creates the score for D&D games, and our customers will be able to go onto the website and grab the soundtrack,” explains Ciccolini. “Avernus has a completely different aura so anything you can do to enhance that feeling of being in another world is going to be great for the experience. I think the music is going to add a whole

extra dimension.”

One final piece of equipment is so standard to the D&D experience that it won't surprise anyone: the DM screen. Yet even here Beadle & Grimm's approach has gone above and beyond what the Platinum experience calls for. Every box set the company creates includes a custom DM screen containing relevant references and epic art on the outside but that goes double for this trip to the Nine Hells.

“The full title of this campaign is *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*, so we decided to create an evergreen DM screen that was specific to Baldur's Gate and will be reusable anytime you want to run a campaign out of that city,” says Rehor. “But we also created one containing all original art and all the necessary references for Avernus. When the characters get sent down to Avernus the DM can switch screens and make it seem like the party has really been consigned to the Nine Hells.”

The Platinum Edition of *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* starts shipping in October and you can pre-order it at [Beadle & Grimm's website](#).

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## UltraPro Figurines of Adorable Power



Roll Initiative for the cutest little monster compendium you've ever seen! UltraPro's adventurers have quested far and wide to seek out the most ferociously adorable beasts of legend.

Four new additions will join the Red Dragon (and its special variant) and the Owl Bear to make six Figurines of Adorable Power available in 2019, with more hatching in 2020.



UltraPro hopes to release the second wave of figures around December 2019. Until then, we think that image above gives you a good idea of what you can expect.

Check out the [UltraPro website](#) for more details.

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# Adventurers League: #Votepipyap



The D&D Adventurers League will usher in the release of *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* in glorious style—by literally paying a visit to Hell!

“I’ve lived in Michigan most of my life and one of the humorous local things is that we have a village called Hell. It’s a very sleepy little town a good fifteen minutes from the nearest highway and it capitalizes on the name,” says Alan Patrick, an organizer with the Adventurers League.

“But when D&D has a Hell-themed book coming out and I happen to have access to a private clubhouse in the village of Hell then things start adding up. The more I looked at it, the more engaging it seemed it could be for our players.”

Patrick has brought together a small army of hand-selected Dungeon Masters from the greater Michigan region and all profits from the event will be split



This fall, the D&D Adventurers League will usher in the release of *Blades in the Dark* into *Avernus* in glorious style! With the help of Pipyp the imp and a small army of phenomenal Dungeon Masters, the Adventurers League will flock to Hell Creek Ranch, Michigan from Friday, September 13th through Sunday, September 15th for three days of highly interactive games!

**Dungeon Masters.** Hand-selected from the greater Michigan region, these Dungeon Masters are supremely talented and have proven time and time again that they are extremely capable storytellers. Some of the featured Dungeon Masters are:

- James Introcasso (co-author of the book)
- Joe Reblin
- Ginny Lereday
- Jon Connor Self
- Aaron Jones
- Fenway Jones
- LaTia Bryant
- DDM admins including Lysa Petrosse, Amy Lynn Dzaia, Claire Hoffman, and Greg Marks' Boating head (I did remove DM), and Alan Patrick.
- Alex Kattmer (of *Gamehole* Con)
- and more!

**WHAT DOES THE EVENT PROMOTE?**

The #VotePipyp event exists to provide public insight on a couple of topics:

**Interactivity in Organized Play.** The D&D Adventurers League campaign largely exists in the public eye as an episodic campaign, where your actions impact that specific game. With this event and our highlighting of interactive games like the Epic and the Open, we will be shining a spotlight on how your decisions can impact everyone else.

**How to Address Heavy Themes in Play.** Our streaming events provide critically important examples of how some charged topics like sensitive topics and controversy between party members can be appropriately handled in public play environments.

**Destination-style Play.** This event provides a static group and DM for the duration of the weekend. This brings everyone more into the mindset and mannerisms of an ongoing campaign as opposed to stand-alone or episodic play. This provides for much greater development of relationships both at and away from the tables and helps to forge lasting positivity and ownership of the campaign's events.

**Charitable Giving.** All profits from this event are split between Extra Life and Jasper's Game Day, two organizations that we (the D&D Adventurers League) very much believe in. Our general games and our streaming games demonstrate how other Adventurers League players and Dungeon Masters can bring charity tie-ins into their games.

**Streaming Games.** In addition to the above points, we plan to broadcast on YouTube using the *Beastie 6*, Grimm Platinum Edition of this adventure:

- **Friday evening.** Segments of the Open
- **Saturday afternoon.** Avernus's Tower & more
- **Sunday morning.** Orsted Piping Fortness
- General spots with author & DM interviews, "how to run great games", and similar topics

**TALKING POINTS**

**Elect-an-imp!** Pipyp the imp, an established NPC in the Adventurers League ongoing campaign, will be running for an actual office. An actor has been hired to play this role, a campaign speech will be given on Friday during dinner, and events have been arranged so that the character is actually going to serve as the Mayor of the village of Hell, Michigan all day Saturday, September 14th.

**Mingle and Gamble!** We're gathering some of the best members of our public play community for social and gaming purposes. Chat, discuss, and replay your way through the weekend for a single price (no per-game fees).

**Premium Content.** We're running the 2019 D&D Open, Epic 09-01 (season 9/ Avernus, Epic 1), and more - including a few surprises that haven't been announced.

between **Extra Life** and **Jasper's Game Day**, two organizations the D&D Adventurers League supports.

As well as being able to buy one square inch of land for \$20, the village of Hell offers some unusual options, including being able to elect someone to be the actual mayor. That has allowed an established NPC from the Adventurers League to become part of the proceedings.

(Select to view)

“Pipyp the imp first showed up in season one of the Adventurers League and is one of our longest running continuously adventurous NPCs. He’s an imp that was summoned to be a familiar by a wizard who didn’t make it to the end of the ritual and is now stranded in the Forgotten Realms. He’s become a cornerstone for us,” Patrick says.

Now Pipyp is running for office. An actor has been hired to play the character and will deliver a campaign speech on Friday before hopefully going on to serve as the Mayor of the village of Hell all day Saturday, September 14, 2019.

“Whoever gets elected mayor—and Pipyp’s a crafty imp, so let’s be honest it’s probably going to be him—will end up doing whatever the normal mayoral duties for a Saturday in a tiny little village might be and that could actually be anything. They’ve had other people do this in the past and it’s been, ‘Come down and help look at ordinance paperwork,’ ‘Please



(Select to view)

make this decision about a parking violation’ or ‘Hey, can you sign this fire permit?’”

Patrick has also taken the image of Pipyap used to promote the event and worked with a 3D modeler to

turn it into a miniature, which all attendees will be given free. That’s on top of the exclusive content he’s promising for those who attend: “I can’t give away too much but let’s just say Avernus is the first level of Hell and there are eight more to explore. Also one of my favorite things about this project is that I get to use the term conjoined twin pixies!”

The D&D Adventurers League release event [#VotePipyap](#) takes place at Hell Creek Ranch, Hell, Michigan from Friday September 13 through Sunday September 15, 2019. You can support [Extra Life](#) and [Jasper’s Game Day](#) by visiting their sites.

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## #VOTEPIPYAP

a D&D Adventurers League release event



This fall, the D&D Adventurers League will usher in the release of Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus in glorious style! With the help of Pipyap the imp and a small army of phenomenal Dungeon Masters, the Adventurers League will flock to Hell Creek Ranch Hell, Michigan from Friday, September 13th through Sunday, September 15th for three days of highly interactive games!

**Dungeon Masters.** Hand-selected from the greater Michigan region, these Dungeon Masters are supremely talented and have proven time and time again that they are extremely capable storytellers. Some of the featured Dungeon Masters are:

- James Introcaso (co-author of the book)
- Joe Reblin
- Ginny Loveday
- Jon Connor Self
- Aaron Jones
- Fenway Jones
- LaTia Bryant
- DDAL admins including Lysa Penrose, Amy Lynn Dzura, Claire Hoffman, and Greg Marks' floating head (1-slot remote DM), and Alan Patrick
- Alex Kammer (of Gamehole Con)
- and more!

### WHAT DOES THE EVENT PROMOTE?

The #VotePipyap event exists to provide public insight on a couple of topics:

**Interactivity in Organized Play.** The D&D Adventurers League campaign largely exists in the public eye as an episodic campaign, where your actions impact that specific game. With this event and our highlighting of interactive games like the Epic and the Open, we will be shining a spotlight on how your decisions can impact everyone else.

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- **Saturday afternoon.** Arkhan's Tower & more
- **Sunday morning.** Wrecked Flying Fortress
- General spots with author & DM interviews, "how to run great games", and similar topics

### TALKING POINTS

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**Premium Content.** We're running the 2019 D&D Open, Epic 09-01 (season 9/ Avernus, Epic 1), and more – including a few surprises that haven't been announced!

## IN THE WORKS



## Baldur's Gate III



We reported on the confirmation by Larian Studios (*Divinity: Original Sin 2*) that *Baldur's Gate III* is in development in the previous issue. The game places the fate of the Forgotten Realms in your hands, as the return of a malevolent presence intent on devouring its foes from the inside out seeks to corrupt everything that stands in its way.

But did you know that the company is using the “secret sauce” of Dungeons & Dragons to craft the perfect game? Here’s a tiny Mike Mearls to tell you more about that and ceremorphosis...

Your browser can't play this video.

[Learn more](#)

Gather your party and subscribe for *Baldur's Gate III* updates at the [official website](#).

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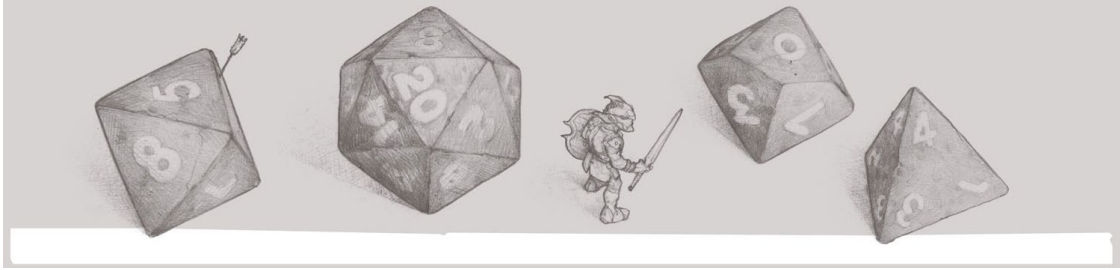
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 IN THE WORKS
 

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## Death Saves

There have been some amazing new releases from Joe Manganiello's clothing line recently, including *Sacrifice to the Spiderqueen* (in collaboration with Erol Otus), *Demogorgon* (in black and white or shocking color) and the *Berserker Destroy* shirt. *Dragon+* sat down with him to ask where he finds inspiration for the line and what fans can expect in the future.



(Select to view)

What's the process for finding art for new Death Saves ranges?

**Joe Manganiello:** Most of our artwork is original. We work with a wide range of artists from around the globe and commission them based on their various strengths and styles to create wearable art. With that said, we are serious historians in terms of old school fantasy, horror, and science fiction. I think you'd be hard pressed to find a piece of art in any of those categories that somehow slipped by us.



(Select to view)

You wrote the foreword in *Dungeons & Dragons Art & Arcana: A Visual History*. Did the authors' diligent search for classic art help you find anything useful for Death Saves?

My hat is off to Kyle, Jon, Mike, and Sam. They did such an amazing job of unifying all of that artwork and history under one cover for the first time. Those guys are buddies and I'm always hitting up Jon and Kyle for the original hi-res images of different

pieces of artwork. So yes, I definitely benefit from all of the leg work and endless files they compiled that, for the most part, are the cleanest computer files of all of those old pieces of art. They are the Death Saves Library of Congress.

How cool is it to see D&D return to Hell with *Descent Into Avernus*? It's so metal and such a cool fit for the brand we wouldn't be surprised to see a Death Saves shop in Avernus' travelling marketplace...

Well, I wrote and conceived of some of that book so it should have some of my stink on it. A handful of characters I created including Arkhan the Cruel appear in a storyline that I conceived and pitched to the folks at Wizards and then fleshed out first with Adam Lee, then Mike Mearls, and eventually Chris Perkins. I think players will love it, and they'll go crazy over the WizKids and Gale Force Nine miniatures I designed that go along with the adventure. Aside from that, I like the setting and I think it's a refreshing change up.



(Select to view)

Since the Death Saves range has become popular users share clothing they've seen in the wild on social media. Is that cool to see? And where's the most unusual/interesting place a shirt/product has popped up?

Are you kidding? I love it. What's really interesting to me is when someone shows up online or at an event with a shirt or jacket on that I know for a fact we only made five, ten or twenty of, and that's it! I also love telling those people about the history and rarity of the piece they are wearing.

And to answer your second question, I recently saw someone in a rare yellow Comic Con exclusive Death Knight shirt with the sleeves ripped off on safari in Africa. Represent!

Since you're always on the lookout for the best D&D art, can you give us a hint at what fans can expect in the future?

Well, between Damian and I, we know where most of the D&D artwork bodies are buried in terms of pre-existing old-school artwork, so it's not like we are really on the lookout for D&D art per say, as much as we're looking at conceptualizing something that hasn't been done before and then hiring a genius artist to match that vision. We're hiring the best



(Select to view)

modern heavy metal artists to create new pieces so the majority of our artwork is original or based on an antiquated design.

With that said, in keeping with tradition, there are some great new colabs with D&D coming. For starters they can expect some mind flayer gear this fall that will absolutely blow minds, some insanely detailed collages, some sick dice sets, and never before seen brand mash-ups involving D&D and some of our other collaborators. I'm really excited for everyone to see what's up this fall!

Visit the [Death Saves website](#) to see even more clothing designs and a range of hats, art and accessories.

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 IN THE WORKS
 

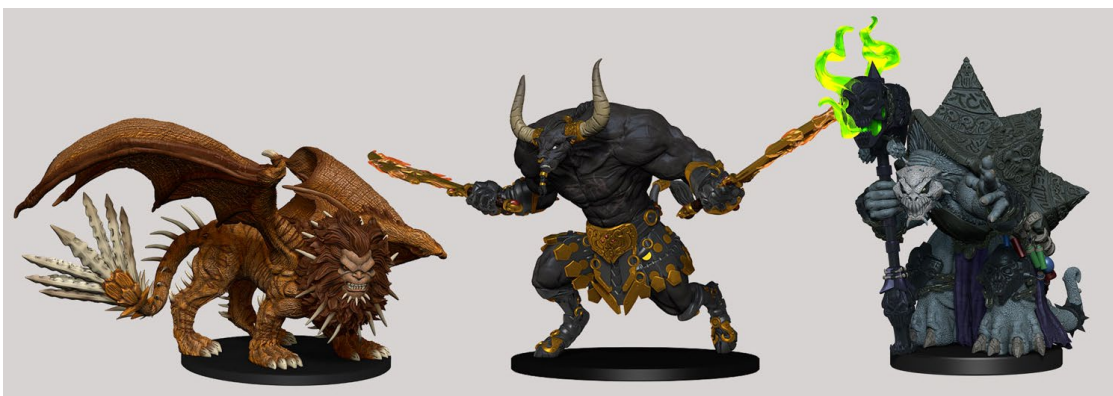
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## WizKids Figures

As Joe Manganiello mentioned on the previous page, some very cool figures are being released to compliment *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*. Krull and Torogar Steelfist are two of Arkhan the Cruel's most trusted allies, and their figures have been created in a collaboration between Manganiello and WizKids.

Torogar is Arkhan's minotaur bodyguard and enforcer, a short-tempered and devout worshipper of Tiamat whose loyalty is hard to come by. Krull is a turtle wearing white face paint that makes his head look like the skull of a giant snapping turtle, with a shell carved with Draconic runes that spell out prayers to Tiamat. If those don't terrify you, have we mentioned Arkhan has a pet mantichore called Chango?



Chango, Torogar & Krull (Select to view)

WizKids' range also has plenty of additions to complement your adventures, whether they take place in Waterdeep or feature the Blood War between demons and devils. Standing at approximately 11 inches tall, the Walking Statue of Waterdeep: The Honorable Knight brings the protector of the greatest northern city impressively to life.



Honorable Knight (center)

There'll also an Infernal Horde to battle, thanks to the 45 figures in the D&D Icons of the Realms: *Baldur's Gate: Decent into Avernus* range. This collection of miniatures features several new devils and demons for players to add to their collections, including the most powerful of the legion of devils, the pit fiend and demons such as the glabrezu and merregon.



White Abishai (Select to view)

Also being released is the perfect vehicle for your party to commandeer and travel across Hell in style. The infernal war machines are the tanks of the Blood War, and devils use them to move about the hellscape as they battle demons. It would definitely be wrong to think of this premium figure as a 'mini' as it stretches to over eleven inches in total!



Find out more about the D&D Icons of the Realms: *Baldur's Gate: Decent into Avernus* range by visiting the [WizKids website](#).

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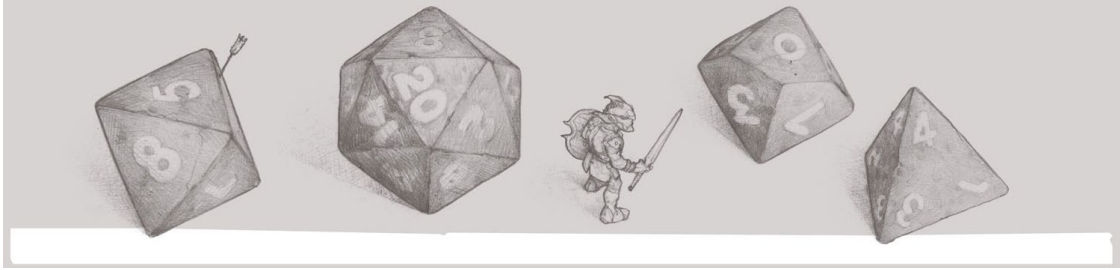
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## IN THE WORKS

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## Funko Pop!



Bow before the terrible and powerful visage of... Pop! Asmodeus! He may seem like the cutest version of the Lord of the Nine Hells ever created but he still needs to be regarded with suspicion lest he try to bargain for your soul. Pop! Mind Flayer is also a creature you wouldn't want to meet alone in the Underdark. But Pop! Minsc and Boo will have your back in any fight against evildoers—you know, like those other two.

These three new figures in the Pop! Games: Dungeons & Dragons range are “coming soon” so watch this space for more details.

The full range of Funko Pop! figures can be viewed at the [official website](#).

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## IN THE WORKS

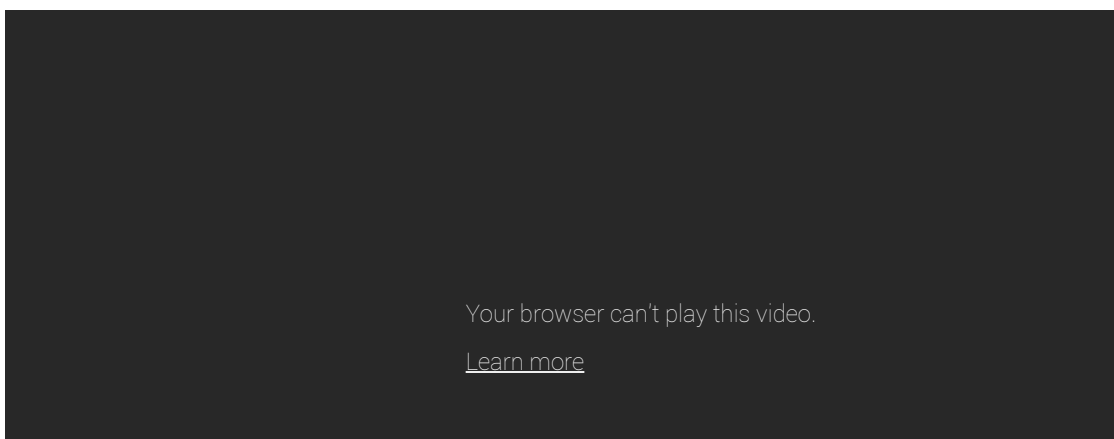
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# Axis & Allies 1942 Online



It's never been easier to strategize your way to world domination playing as the United States, UK, Soviet Union, Germany, and Japan at the height of the second World War! *Axis & Allies 1942 Online* is an official adaptation of the classic board game that's available to download now.





Find out more about *Axis & Allies 1942 Online* at the [official website](#) and download the game on [Steam](#).

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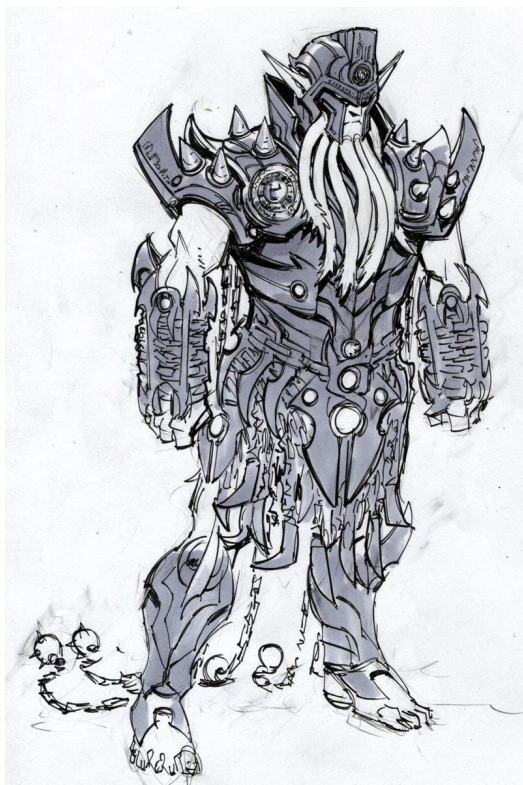
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# PLOTTING THE DESCENT

Artist Max Dunbar spills the secrets of crafting a Hellish landscape and its denizens as he shares his concept art with *Dragon+*.

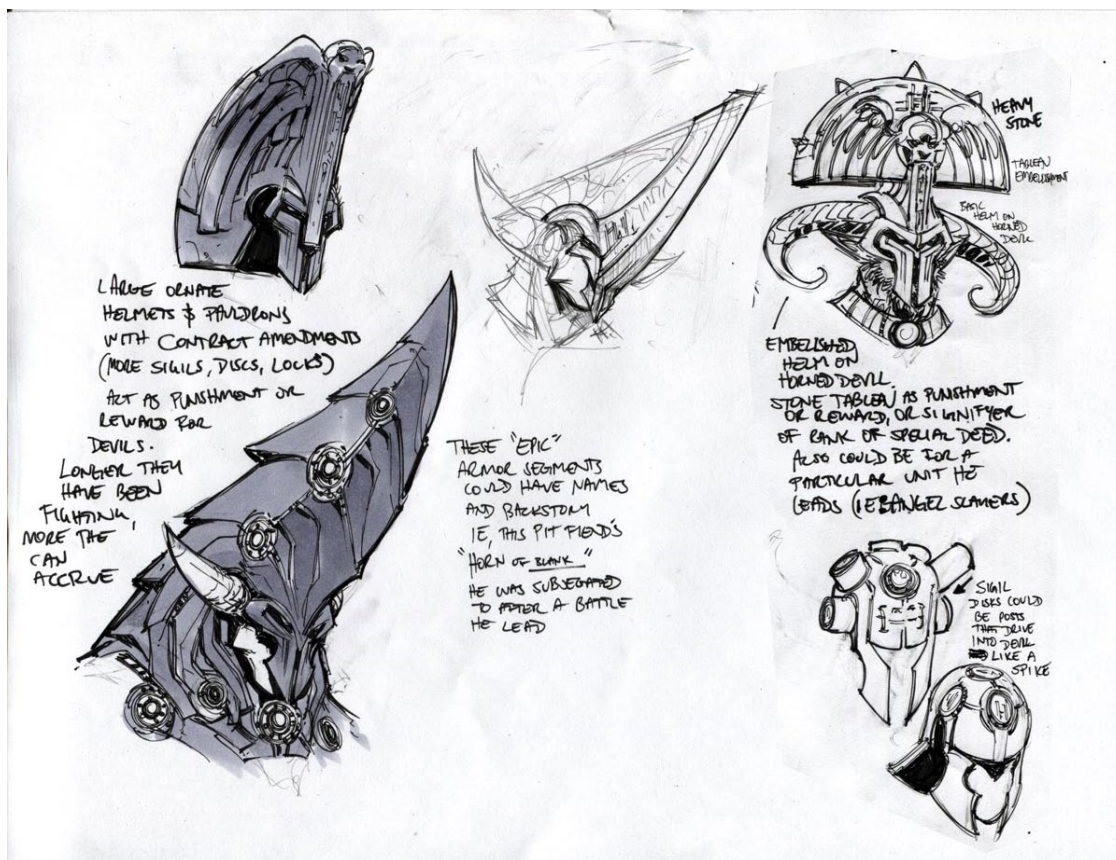
**B**efore a source book has been written. Before a cover has been commissioned. Before a set designer has received a brief for *D&D Live*. Before a Dungeons & Dragons release becomes more than a twinkle in the D&D Team’s eye, there is the “concept push”. Three artists entered Richard Whitters’ artistic Thunder Dome... and all three artists left, despite the *Mad Max*-like themes of their speculative work.



(Select to view)

Max Dunbar was one of those artists, making the short trip from Vancouver, British Columbia to Renton, Washington to spend three weeks at the Wizards of the Coast offices. “At the time I didn’t even know the name of the project we were working on. They had story elements written out for us and gave each of us a list,” he tells *Dragon+*. “When they told us what we were doing, there was almost this quiet energy in the room. I think our minds were spinning with all of the different ideas that immediately came into our heads.

“I would go into their offices and spend my time working my way down that list, trying to come up with cool ideas and creative concepts. It was an amazing process for an artist to be involved with.”

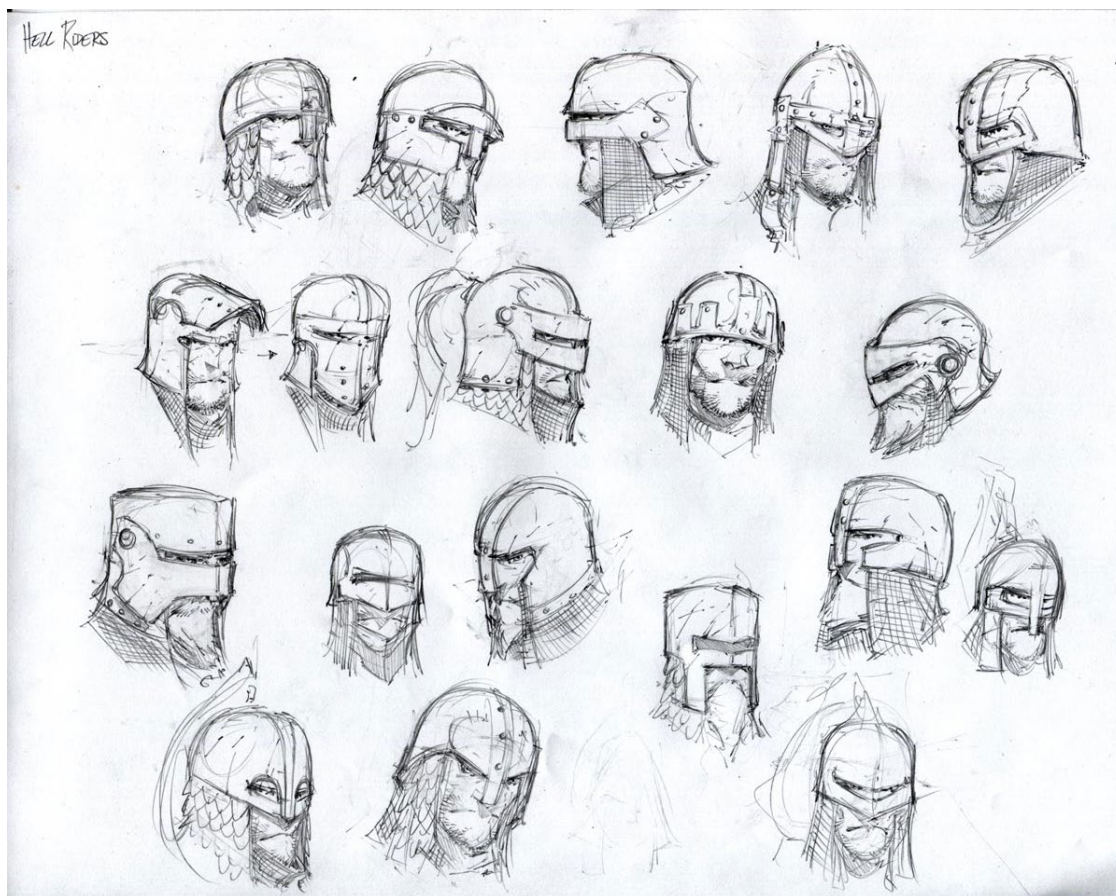


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## WELCOME TO HELL

The full team for the concept push for *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* consisted of Dunbar, Mike "Daarken" Lim and Aleksi Briclot, working alongside the in-house Dungeons & Dragons art team of Shawn Wood and Whitters. Their destination: the hellscape of Avernus.

"I was incredibly excited when I heard we were going to take on Avernus and the Blood War because at the start of the process it's a blank slate and our work can go in any direction. They gave us some background on the conflict and the story elements around that, and explained what we should think of in terms of demons and devils," Dunbar says.

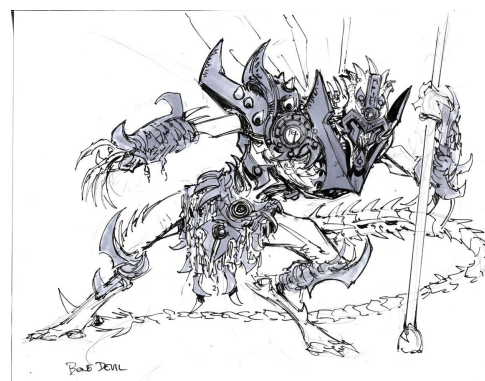


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“You feel like a kid in a candy store. There’s so much possibility and your mind’s going a thousand beats a minute. I was given a big list of demons and devils, and also tasked with designing their armor and weapons. You’re so inspired and so excited to start that when you get to the table you’re just sketching like crazy.”

As the sketches began to flow, they were pinned to a wall. The result was an amazing, exclusive gallery that spurred further ideas from the artists as the beginnings of the project began to take shape.

“It’s a very free flowing, organic, collaborative experience and was incredibly inspirational,” Dunbar shares. “It’s also very intimidating—in a good way!— from an artistic standpoint. A couple of our team members are super-seasoned concept artists whose phenomenal work has that painterly D&D sourcebook style. My work is line-art heavy



(Select to view)



and more in the comic-book style of drawing.

“We’d all stand in front of the board and spitball ideas: ‘Wouldn’t it be cool if this was changed? Or if we used this instead of that?’ They’re incredibly accommodating when it came to being creative and there were a couple of times where they said, ‘Just run with it and see if anything comes of that.’ A lot of really good ideas and a couple of characters came out of those sessions.”



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## DEVILS VS. DEMONS

Part of the joy of the creative process came from the variety

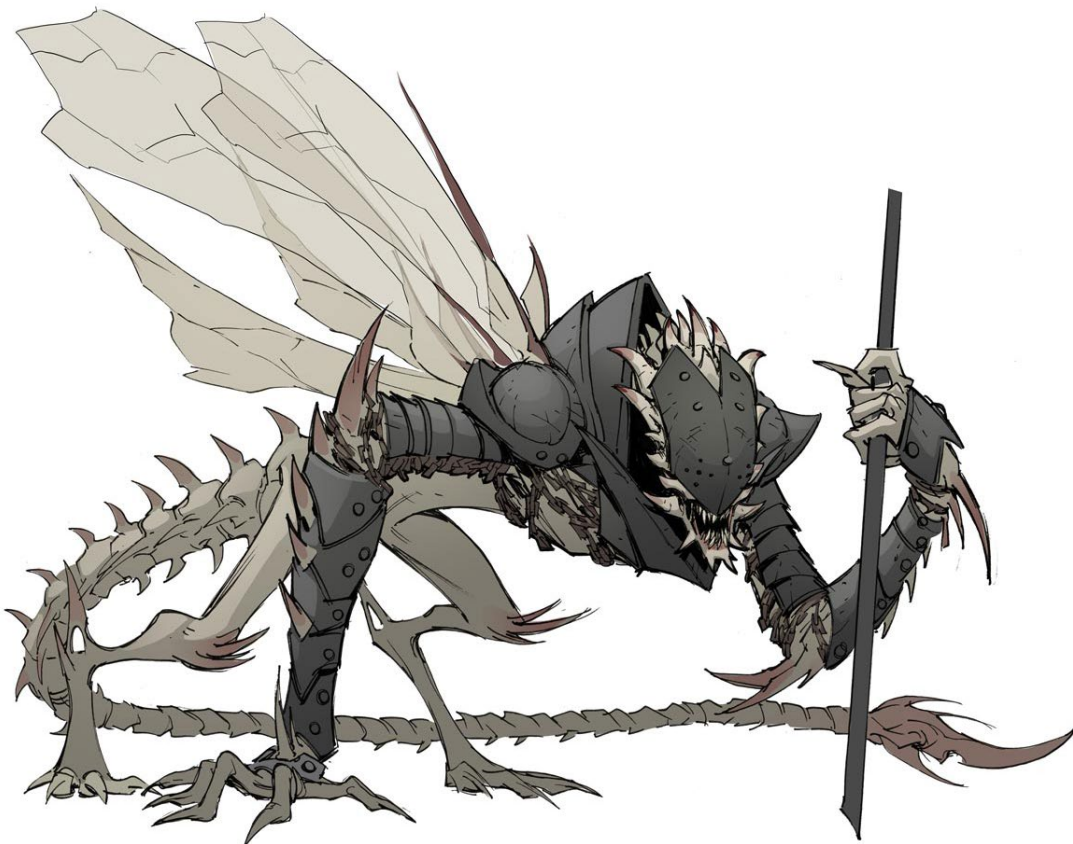
presented by the denizens of Hell. The two sides of the Blood War include the chaotic and crazed demons versus the lawful and ordered devils. The analogy used to describe the two sides was the scene at the beginning of *Gladiator*. The devils are the Roman legionnaires who are very orderly, well armored, and have specific tactics. Their opponents the demons are the more savage inhabitants of Germania, a fairly unruly if powerful group of people.



(Select to view)

“With demons and devils you dial that up to eleven. The demons are an unrelenting, endless, chaotic army battering against the equally evil but lawful and organized forces that the devils command. They’re a completely different type of evil! Demons don’t even necessarily have the same building methods or even the same attack and defense styles as the devils.

It’s a fun exercise to come up with such different options for each of these two factions.”



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## THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

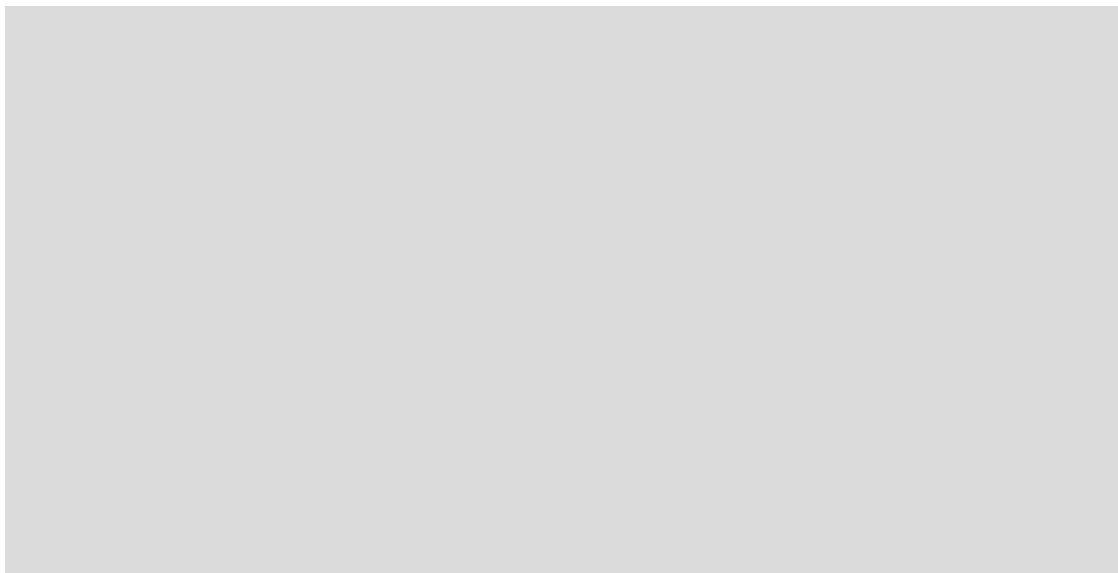
The harsh reality of a concept push is that things will inevitably be lost along the way, as ideas evolve and move in new directions over time. Dunbar hopes some of those may make it into future sourcebooks or other D&D products, but there was one in particular he was sad didn't make the cut.

“Going in you know you'll throw a lot down on paper and a percentage of that will not see the light of day. There was one demon in particular who was part of that faction's fighting forces and I designed a bunch of minions around him. That included a demon lord who had an enormous war barge with cannons and all sorts of crazy defenses built into it to float down the River Styx.



(Select to view)

“It was a really neat idea. But that demon lord hasn't made it into the final story, which is unfortunate, but the hope is that he could come up at any other time. I got to design a couple of these types of things, including one that's less of a barge and more of a creature which was a blast as well. That stuff is really fun to work on in the moment, even if it doesn't make it into the book.”





## The Abyssal Chicken

“The abyssal chicken is an example of how great this process was,” Max Dunbar tells *Dragon+*. “We were designing hellscape terrain and there’s this idea that Hell is massive and the scale of it is overwhelming. I thought it would be cool if way down at the bottom of a giant tower you could see a little flock of birds to give it some scale. You’d see that the birds are flying low compared to the height of the tower, suggesting that this structure must be extremely high and our view must be very, very far away from it.

“I asked if there were any sort of wild creatures in Hell and it turns out there aren’t many animals indigenous to this inhospitable wasteland. So I wanted to try and design something. I doodled away at different shapes and came up with a weird sort of thorny creature that was almost like a check mark. I then decided part of it could split into wings and it could have this gross mouth at the front.

“I showed it to Richard Whitters and explained it doesn’t have feathers and is more like a raw chicken. I believe Adam Lee named it the abyssal chicken a few days later. But I never thought

it would make it into the campaign, so that is mind blowing. The crazy thing is I have no clue what their capabilities are! I only know that it can fly short distances and understand Abyssal. I'm very excited to see the official stat block.”

You can see more of Max Dunbar's work on [his website](#) and in the pages of [IDW's Dungeons & Dragons comic](#), and connect with him on [Twitter](#).

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## Character Concepts: Wizard Fashion

Looking for wizarding wear that's hotter than a fireball? Artist and illustrator Samantha Darcy highlights the latest trends that will have you saying yes to the robes.

Samantha Darcy



**G**o ahead and picture a “wizard” in your head. What are they wearing? Chances are your mind conjures up the flowing robes of... well... every famous fantasy wizard ever! Was that robe grey? Or maybe it was the classic purple-with-gold-stars and similarly patterned pointed hat? Rather than break away from that stereotype, this class can embrace it in new and evermore practical ways.

Traditionally a class of scholars and hermits, wizards offer amazing magical versatility, so it stands to reason their appearances would be just as varied. This is a class where the characters generally aren't afraid to look eccentric or creative.

Whatever time period your D&D game is set in, you're still likely to want an outfit that's built for practicality. After all, where are you going to stash all those spell components in that robe?



(Select to view)

## PRACTICAL MAGIC

Wizards generally seek out knowledge but that doesn't mean they spend all their time sitting in dusty libraries. Their academic exploits can easily take them from the midst of a busy urbanscape to combing ancient ruins, so consider clothes that help them move around their chosen environment.

For example, spellcasters looking to further their necromantic goals by crawling around catacombs will need pants with reinforced knees. Shirts decoratively slashed at the shoulders and elbows, meanwhile, allow for freer movement to utilize somatic spell components.

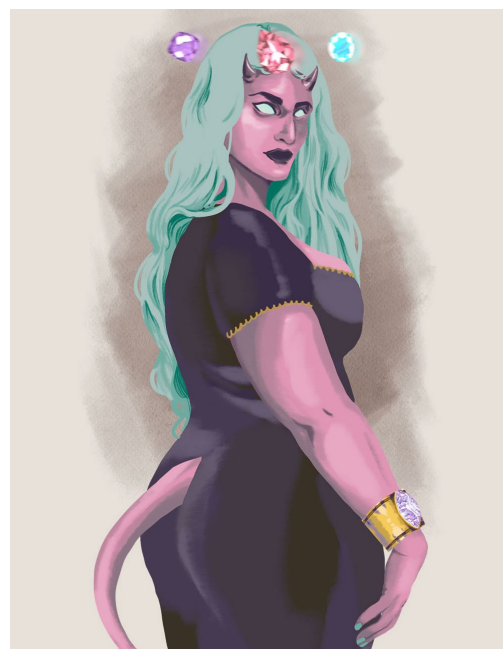
A busy academic life may also take its toll or spur someone on to dress more flamboyantly. A weary student of magic may simply wear yesterday's linen shirt and the pants they ended up sleeping in, without worrying about wider fashion concerns. At the other end of the scale, a divination wizard dabbling in gambling may flaunt their wealth using bright colors and patterns styled after a peacock. And never underestimate the intimidation power of an exceedingly high collar, or a dress made of netting that resembles a spiderweb.

Practical concerns can also have an impact on your attire. Strapping your collection of wands in bandoliers across your chest, ready to withdraw and cast at a moment's notice, makes a bold statement. Or perhaps you've embroidered the verbal components of your favorite spell into the lining of your coat? And if your wizard carries around a lot of tomes, they might forgo the traditional backpack in favor of a purse, a battered suitcase or even a handcart.

It's also important to think about how your subclass might affect your appearance. All it takes to turn your necromancer into a "new necromantic" are some black silk flowers and lace (incidentally, silk organza is known for its beautiful appearance when draped, if you want to go even further into designing your character's outfit). Or perhaps you want to totally subvert expectations and give your necromancer a fondness for hair ribbons and cotton-candy colored dresses that hides them in plain sight.

## A CUT ABOVE

Outside of the cut and pattern of a wizard's outfit, there's a whole world of magical styling to consider. School of Conjuration wizards, who favor spells that produce objects and creatures out of thin air, can have the most variable wardrobes—though every garment checks in at no more than three feet long and is only around for an hour at a time. School of Enchantment students should also consider how they might project



(Select to view)



their abilities through their outfits.

The options presented by magic itself also affect the usefulness of a wizard's outfit. Your personal magical touch could be something as simple as enchanting that stunning but impractical pair of shoes to be miraculously comfortable all the time. Or it might be a venture into the world of fashionable storage, especially if your DM is a stickler for keeping track of spell components. For instance, a *bag of holding* is a much-loved piece of gear in the world of Dungeons & Dragons but is underused as a piece of costuming. Consider sewing one into a pocket to provide a handy place to stash everything you need and free up your hands.

It's also possible to accessorize. That crystal orb arcane focus or those dowsing tools turn into a lovely pendant so easily, while multiple *Ioun stones* make for both decorative and powerful headwear. And is that your familiar's head popping out of the top of that handbag?



(Select to view)

While there are no poor choices for a wizard's outfit if they aid roleplay, here's one historical aside that might make you question your character's headgear. The stereotypical conical hat is believed to have originated with a medieval scholar named Duns Scotus, who believed the shape to be a symbol of knowledge. The idea was that the cone would funnel ideas directly to the mind of the wearer! Scotus wore one himself, and the name "Duns" later gave us the term dunce cap.

As with any costuming, the important thing is to inject your wizard's personality into what they wear. Think about the ways you can utilize your spell components, arcane focus, and other aspects of wizardry to influence your look and you can make your character's appearance as versatile and eccentric as the class itself.

**Samantha Darcy** is a fantasy illustrator who lives in a tower of toadstools and teeth, located somewhere in the strange wilds of Indiana. She has contributed to the *Uncaged Anthology* and *Rolled & Told*, and currently labors on *The Adventurer's Fashion Primer*—a guide to historical and fantasy fashions—which can be supported via her [Patreon page](#).



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## Behind the Screen: Sign Language and D&D

Matt Chapman chats with interpreters on both sides of the Atlantic working to make D&D more accessible for players and viewers who are hard of hearing.

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**I**t's incredible what we take for granted. Imagine heading out to play Dungeons & Dragons, finding your seat on the appropriate side of the DM screen, unpacking your dice, and waiting for the scene to be set—only to find you and your friends lack the language to describe that world! That's the situation deaf and hard of hearing players and DMs have previously found themselves in using today's systems of sign language.

“I was playing Dungeons & Dragons with my hearing friends and I wished I could get my deaf friends and family involved as well,” says

Kieron McMullan, a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter. “But sign language is a situationally relative lexicon, which can make it pretty sparse. When we tried to play D&D, we found that the vocabulary simply wasn’t there.”

American Sign Language (ASL) advocate Mysty Vander found that difficulty in bringing the rich world of Dungeons & Dragons to life had the knock-on effect of limiting the potential number of players and DMs. When a brittle bone disorder called osteogenesis imperfecta started to cause hearing loss, she began to struggle playing D&D in certain settings, such as local game stores, conventions, and primarily with strangers.

“Knowing very few deaf people in a rural area I struggled for a while emotionally with the thought of losing my space in the D&D community due to my deaf gain. I want to be proud of both my deafness and this new culture and community I’ve become a part of and embrace every aspect of it. But it can be scary when a new way of navigating life doesn’t mesh with playing tabletop games in general. There were no ASL-friendly gaming groups or activity of that sort locally.”

### Dungeons & Dragons in ASL by Mysty Vander



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## Coming Together

Vander set up **ASL for RPG** and her search for a way to bring her

two worlds together led her to Mimsy Dorsey, who had become a moderator on the [Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition Facebook group](#). One of Dorsey's first posts introduced themselves as an ASL user keen to discuss the topic.

“I posted a signed video asking people about accessibility in their games and that's where I met Mysty! The next thing I know people were sharing her tweets about finding signs for D&D concepts and I joined her in this wonderful project.”

McMullan began a similar project on the other side of the Atlantic, founding [Somatic Component](#) with his brother and a few friends who have always been interested in fantasy and sci-fi, with the aim of creating, sharing, and promoting BSL fantasy language. His inspiration was a scientific project in Scotland.

### Roll for Perception in ASL by Mysty Vander

“I saw a news article about a guy in Dundee who created a lot of scientific signs,” McMullan remembers. “Before he began his study those signs didn't exist, which made it really difficult to get into the subject. He went on to create a lot of missing signs that are now used in the scientific community.”

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## Sign of the Times

McMullan hopes Somatic Component can have the same impact in the RPG world and help redress the lack of official signs for iconic

fantasy concepts. “There’s no sign for goblin or dragon because these things weren’t established,” he says, adding that commercial hits such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Game of Thrones* have made creating those signs a lot easier. However, not everything in the world of Dungeons & Dragons is as simple as merging the words “owl” and “bear”.

### Beholder in ASL by Mysty Vander

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[Learn more](#)

“There were a whole lot of weird and wonderful creatures we had to make up,” says Isla van der Heiden, a BSL interpreter with the *Adventurer’s Wanted* Edinburgh Fringe show in 2018. “I had no idea how to interpret a sphinx,” adds Thomas Malone, an interpreter in the same show who reprised his role in the 2019 production. “A cat’s lower body with a woman’s upper body but nine feet tall—it was hard to convey that without explicitly spelling it out.”

Yet certain choices were simpler when it came to building a D&D lexicon. “Cthulhu was much easier,” Malone says. “I took four fingers and put them under my chin to create Cthulhu’s weird tentacle mouth. No-one’s going to be upset about that choice.”

### Elf in BSL by Isla van der Heiden



McMullan has had similar success bringing other elements of D&D to life. When **tortles** were released as a playable race as part of the **Extra Life** charity drive, he looked at how they might be represented in BSL signing.

“The sign for a tortoise is the left hand clasped over the right hand with the thumb pushed out creating the head. It’s horizontal and that’s typical for a creature,” he says. “We anthropomorphize bipeds by having our index finger in a vertical position. To anthropomorphize the turtle we simply stand the sign for tortoise erect. A turtle is essentially a tortoise on two feet which can use its hands, so why complicate that?”

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## Core Concepts

If the creatures that stalk Faerûn and its connected planes present an interesting translation challenge, so do many other gameplay aspects of Dungeons & Dragons. Even core elements such as dice rolls and their results can be difficult to translate for new viewers.

“There are some elements you might take for granted—surely everyone knows what a natural twenty is? When everyone rolls and

one person rolls a critical success I signed, ‘I got twenty!’ and the audience cheered,” says Malone. “Yet when the next person calculates their number and they get twenty-two but there’s no audience reaction, a deaf person watching might think, ‘What are the rules here? Shouldn’t the higher number be better?’ You have to work out how to convey that to a deaf audience.”

### Roll for Initiative in ASL by Mysty Vander

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[Learn more](#)

“There’s not really a sign in BSL for Initiative, so we had to make that up. The basic result of that roll in D&D is that it determines the order you act in, so we signed that as ‘Roll for order,’” says van der Heiden. “An early proposed sign for ‘Roll for Initiative’ was rolling dice and then adding a shaking letter ‘I,’” says Dorsey, who tackled the same issue in ASL on the other side of the pond. “The thought was that it should be quick to sign because it is used so frequently. We were able to balance that with other concerns—like conceptual accuracy and not being too locked into English—to come up with our current sign.”

Mysty Vander also found a challenge in developing signs to translate some of the more eclectic spells found in Dungeons & Dragons: “Take *prestidigitation* for example. Before discovering a sign that properly translated that spell we were fingerspelling it, which was a feat all on its own!”

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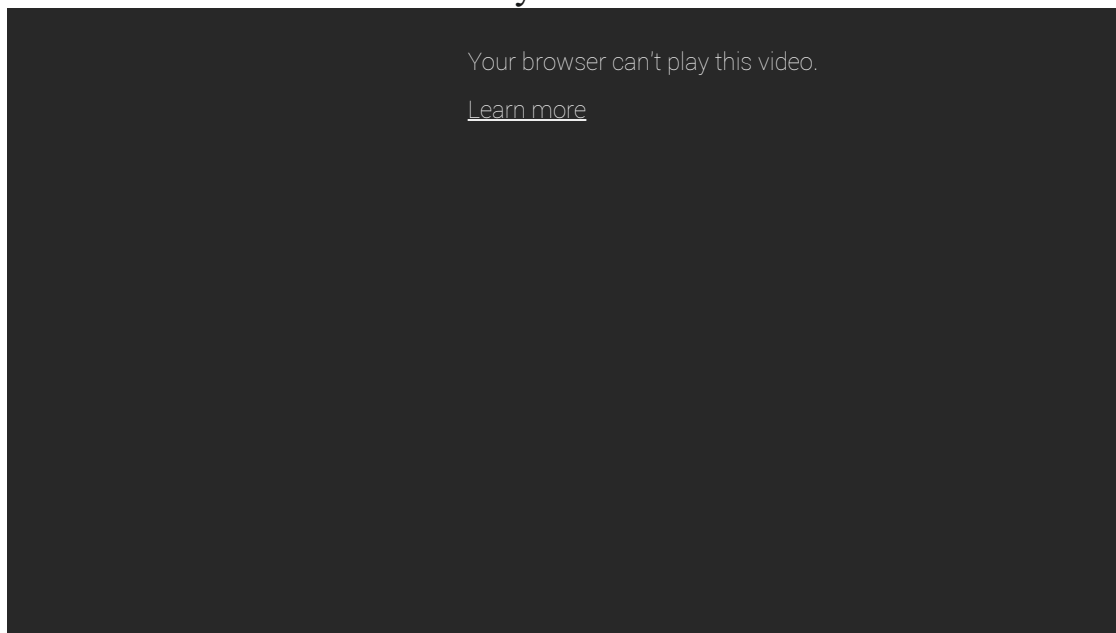
## Digging Deeper



“Anyone playing with language is creating poetry as far as I’m concerned. You can give signs a lot of depth,” says McMullan. “For example, kenku are crow people who can copy things. The BSL sign for ‘Copy’ is a fairly open hand that you close by pinching the thumb along the fingers. But kenku also have beaks so you can use that copy action to create the beak and you’re immediately adding another layer.”

“It’s similar with orcs. In BSL we used to start with a hand open at our chin and close the hand as we go upwards. That used both hands and wasn’t as speedy as the signs for some other races so we played around with it. As orcs traditionally have large tusks and are usually bad in the fantasy genre someone suggested using the ‘H’ devil horns handshape to create an orc’s underbite. As that handshape is used to sign both evil and devil it also adds an extra layer to the word. The sign is now fixed in our group and we’re hoping it grows in popularity.”

### Orc in BSL by Kieron McMullan



Sometimes a sign is used to describe multiple similar concepts which would be obvious by their context when discussed in the real world. Yet those elements might appear alongside one another in Dungeons & Dragons, leaving sign language interpreters the task of making them seem distinct for a deaf audience.

“For instance, in BSL that ‘H’ handshape is placed on your forehead so it looks like you have devil horns and that can mean demons,

devils or evil,” says Malone.

“But devil horns are also what you’d associate with a tiefling! Then what do you use to differentiate cambion or succubae—when you look through the *Monster Manual* all these creatures are totally visually different. And you can’t describe the Blood War as the horned people fighting the horned people for 1,000 years, because they’re completely different factions.”

### Demogorgon in ASL by Mysty Vander



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## Live Signing

Opportunities for interpreters to work with D&D have historically been very scarce. Yet as ASL and BSL campaigns continue to champion the live signing of D&D streamed games, more are beginning to appear. It’s a step forward from when Malone was studying BSL at university and the tutor asked what kind of work he wanted to interpret—listing the most regular examples as medical, legal, or community assignments.

“I joked that I wanted to interpret Dungeons & Dragons and asked if they’d ever had that kind of assignment? My tutor said she’d never even heard of a D&D assignment. However, when I graduated I got an email from that same lecturer telling me someone was running a Dungeons & Dragons show at the Edinburgh Fringe. I laughed because she said it would never happen and it was literally my first

job.

“I thought this was the easiest baby step possible into the world of BSL because if there’s one thing I know it’s D&D. The reality is it’s one of the hardest assignments I’ve ever had.”

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## Layered Performances

Van der Heiden found the same thing all sign language interpreters face when they delve into those dungeons—if the language itself has layers, then so do the interactions at the table.

“I’d done a fair bit of interpreting for theatre productions in my final year of university and it was similar to that, just with more voices. The difference is in a regular theatre performance you have a script so even with some adlibbing you know what’s coming. But in Dungeons & Dragons you have no idea what people are going to say or what the characters are going to do. You might know what the DM knows but there’s always that element of surprise,” she says, revealing that she practised signing live D&D using *Critical Roll* and other streams.

“Everyone is essentially playing two roles: themselves and their D&D character. Players tend to break character mostly at the start and end of a game, and during the game they tend to be more in character.”

“I’m having to jump between all of these different layers when I’m signing,” adds Malone. “There’s the real world, which is four or five people sitting around throwing dice. Then there are the rolls, where you explain that by adding this number to this other number something has been achieved. Then there’s the story. I’m one person and there can be five people talking at the same time. To tell the difference I’ll say, ‘Now I’m the elf woman’ or ‘Now I’m the dragon man’ and sigh that they’re having a conversation and then she casts a spell. But it can be tricky to portray which layer they’re now talking in. One second I’m the DM, then I’m the person the DM is talking to, then I’m the character who suddenly makes a meta joke about the real world. It’s tricky to juggle all those balls in the air.

Call Lightning in ASL by Mysty Vander

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[Learn more](#)

“One player chose a bard as his character and brought out a guitar in the middle of the show and started singing. That’s like a fourth layer! Interpreting a song mid-game is hard.”

Whereas Mimsy has yet to experience a full game as an interpreter—although they have used ASL as a shared in-game language between a group of celestial characters—Mysty plays a regular game which communicates only in ASL.

“Our group meets every month or two and we switch up who DMs so we each get to practice and gain familiarity with signing. Being able to establish different signing patterns—or ‘accents’ if you will—to establish that you are switching between different characters or communicating as yourself at the table is a ton of fun!”

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## Bringing the Game Alive

As players, the sign language interpreters are used to seeing the world of Dungeons & Dragons in one way; as interpreters they have to build that world so a hard of hearing audience can also make sense of it. This mental shift takes them from theater of the mind to crafting a world in space.

“When I play Dungeons & Dragons, I see it all in my head or have figurines depicting the action on the table. When you’re signing, you’ve got it all in front of you,” says van der Heiden, who feels the storytelling aspect of D&D is the most fun thing to translate. “If

someone is describing a world then as they're speaking those words you can take that and put it into another language to build that world in space." "There's landscape, there's weather. You have to get a lot more imaginative and inventive," adds McMullan.

Such varied gameplay options are not without their own issues. Malone cites the use of puzzles in D&D as something that has to be precisely relayed so a deaf audience doesn't struggle to understand them.

"If you've not seen the puzzle it can be like trying to describe the pieces of a jigsaw without showing someone a picture," he says. "You have to be very exact: 'Okay, there are six dials on the wall all turned to face different points in the room.' If you don't convey it accurately then the solution can be confusing for a deaf person when the players figure it out. 'Hang on, you said there were six dials but four walls? Where are the other two dials?'"

### Burning Hands in ASL by Mysty Vander

One area where sign language really shines thanks to its visual nature is combat. Malone feels the performance of the interpreter adds an extra poetic element to D&D.

"A standard turn in English would be something like, 'My character draws his sword, I run up, and I attack the creature with my sword.' You can add a little spice to that but it's essentially that description," he says. "In sign language you'd reach down to draw your sword,

move your finger to indicate you're running up to the creature and actually have to swing that weapon. It's a thin line between D&D and LARPing because you're using your body to convey those actions."

McMullan also believes the physicality of the performance allows more nuanced character traits to shine through: "In most fantasy media, orcs have big jaws, a bunch of tusks, a big brow, and are evil. Using facial expressions you can portray a good orc. They'll look the same as a bad orc but their body stance changes and their expression softens. They're still an orc so the sign stays the same but those non-manual features bring the character through. It's a more immersive way of describing the kind of creature they are."

"People pick up on the facial expressions," agrees van der Heiden. "Having people come up at the end of the game and say how interesting it was to watch the sign language version of events is always fun."

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## Adoption of Signs

McMullan hopes to be able to build an accepted language of D&D signs for BSL and plans to mimic the scientific system that was pioneered by **Moray House** in Edinburgh as a way to get them established.

"Someone might have said, 'I don't know the sign for magnet or atom' because those weren't in common parlance. In that model, a lot of scientific and mathematical signs were made available on a website and in a mobile app so people can quickly find them. Once they were accessible, they started to pervade the community and become adopted.

"It's the same as any new language, including spoken—words like 'twerk' and the verb 'to Google' didn't exist until people started using them. We want to create a similar grassroots community, working together to establish signs. Our aim is to upload the signs we use to Twitter and Instagram to share them as our language grows. If a sign gets taken up by the community, then it's established."

Mind Flayer in ASL by Mysty Vander



While there's no barrier stopping systems such as ASL and BSL building up a common language, every system of sign language does have its differences. ASL is based on French Sign Language (LSF) and has its roots in the spoken and written French language, so its basic grammar differs from BSL.

“Even fingerspelling is hugely different between the two sign languages because BSL uses two hands while ASL uses one,” says Vander.

“Sign language is a native language and English has powered on ahead without it. How does a native language move with the times when it's been left behind? How can it catch up? How can it get ahead?” McMullan asks. “Native languages need to recognize the need to adapt or they die out. Languages aren't static, they either grow or decrease. And we want this to grow.”

**To find out more about sign language and D&D you can connect with [ASL for RPG](#) on Twitter or with [Somatic Component](#) on Instagram. You can also watch the *Adventurers Wanted stage show* from the Edinburgh Fringe with BSL interpretation on YouTube.**



## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

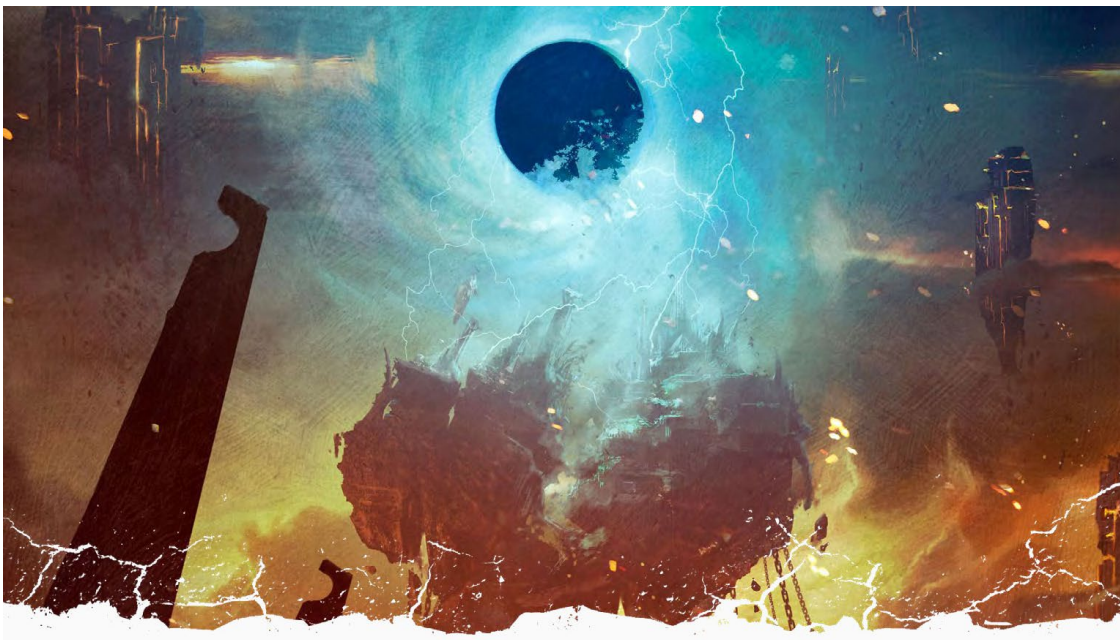
Since *Dragon+* reported on D&D resources for players with visual issues in Issue 23, the Library of Congress's National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) has released the *Player's Handbook* as an audiobook. Producing this fully navigable “talking book” has been a highly complex undertaking and the producers and narrators have worked hard to replicate the print book experience for NLS patrons. It will be followed by two additional D&D titles—the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the *Monster Manual*—allowing the core texts for fifth



edition to be accessed by those with temporary or permanent low vision, blindness, or a physical disability that prevents them from reading or holding the printed page.



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## Adventurers League

The devilish Chris Lindsay previews an Adventurers League campaign that sees players forge their fate in hellfire.

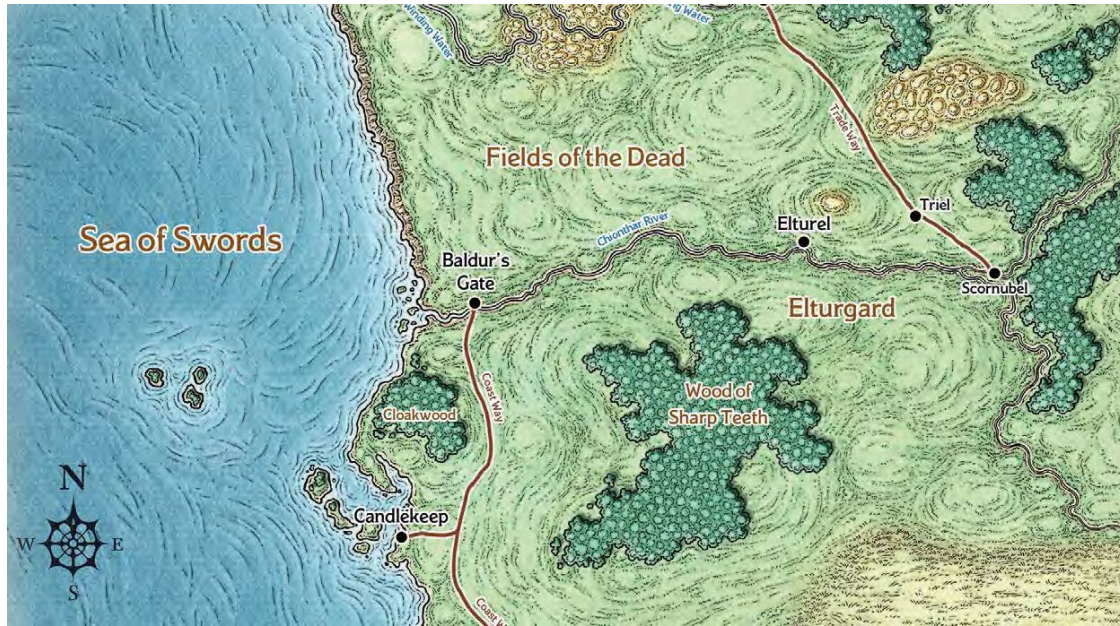
Matt Chapman

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**A** very special D&D Adventurers League event is taking place **in Michigan** in September for the launch of *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*. If the Adventurers League team endures both the in-game trip to the Nine Hells and that *literal* trip to Hell (surviving Pipyap's inevitably chaotic **reign as mayor** along the way!), it'll begin rolling out those adventures worldwide.

Season nine of the Adventurers League sees heroes starting out on an adventuring career guaranteed to fill them with dread. They'll travel to the once-lush but now devastated Avernus—first layer of the Nine Hells—as they engage the enemy on the front lines of this planespanning Blood War. While the wider plot pits players against the infinite evils of the Nine Hells, including infernal war machines, nefarious contracts and the diabolical hordes of the archdevil Zariel

herself, their early skirmishes take place on the shadowy streets of Baldur's Gate.



“The first adventure in the series, DDAL09-01 *Escape from Elturel*, is a prologue and actually starts at the very beginning of the *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* story,” Product Marketing Specialist Chris Lindsay tells *Dragon+*. “It focuses on the people who live around the area of the now missing city of Elturel who must travel to Baldur's Gate as refugees. It offers a more thorough opportunity to interact with the people who have experienced the city's disappearance but weren't actually inside when it vanished.”

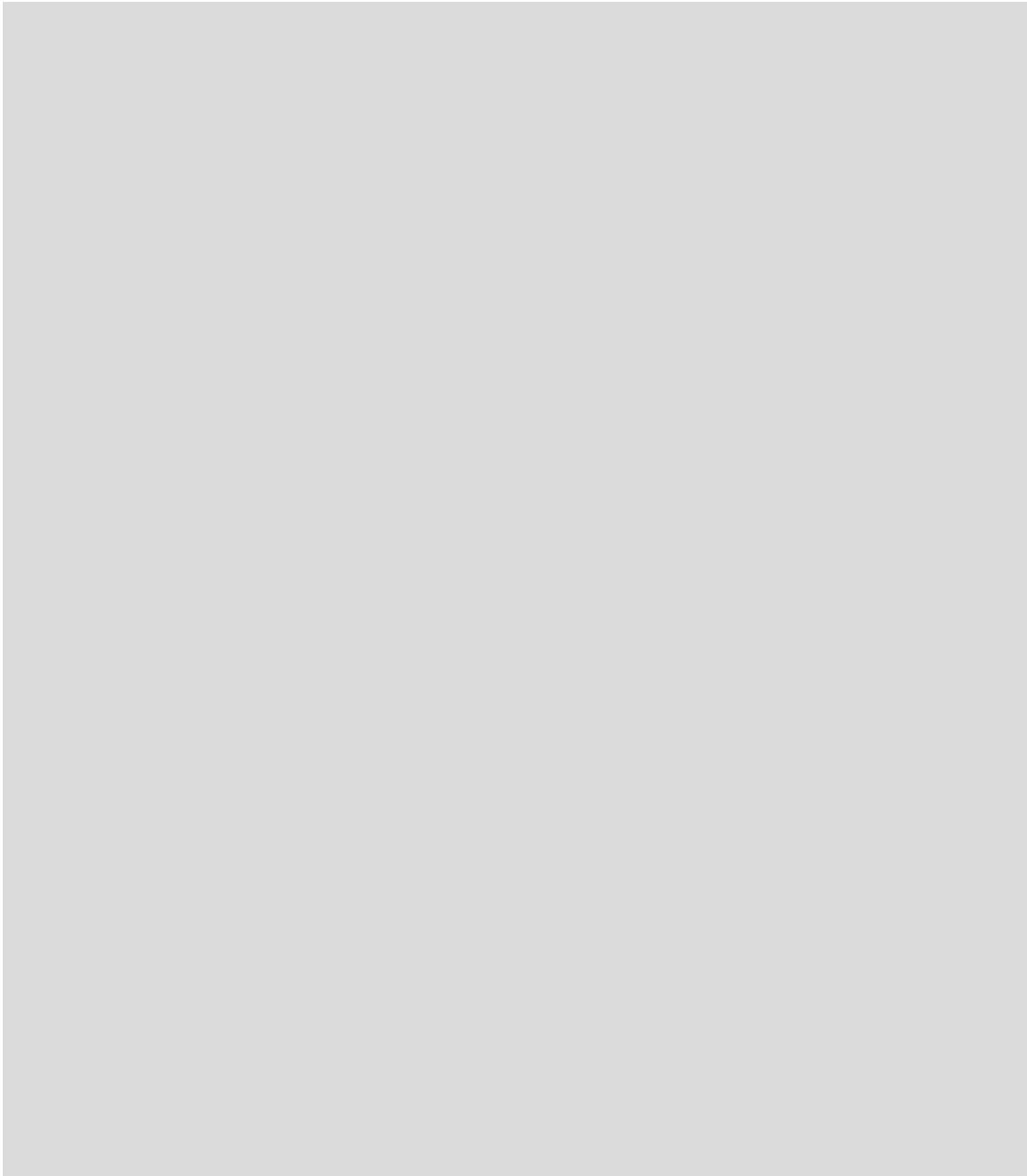


**INGLORIOUS REDEMPTION (Spoiler**

## Alert)

The ninth season of D&D Adventurers League campaigns is titled *Inglorious Redemption* after the ambitions of one of its protagonists. Characters have the opportunity to accompany a mysterious young girl into the hellscape as she searches for hellrider souls that remain untarnished despite being trapped in Avernus.

“The player characters can take Dara with them to Avernus as she’s on a mission to save the souls of the lost hellriders. She’s only a child but is keenly interested in going with the party despite her young age,” Lindsay says, before revealing, “she’s the chosen of the god Ilmater and is actually quite powerful.”



DDAL 09-01



# ESCAPE FROM ELTURGARD

## A Baldur's Gate Adventure

Damnation! The entire city of Elturel—along with its denizens—have been drawn into Avernus, the first layer of the Nine Hells! While those fortunate enough to have been outside of the city's walls have been spared that fate, they're not yet out of danger! The refugees formed a caravan bound for the nearby city of Baldur's Gate. Can you keep them safe from devils, bandits, and one another until they reach safety?

*Four, One-Hour Introductory Mini-adventures for 1st and 2nd Level Characters.*

Optimized For: APL 1



### CREDITS

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**Editing:** Travis Woodall, Greg Marks

**D&D Adventurers League Guildmaster:** Chris Lindsay

**Art Director and Graphic Designer:** Rich Lescouffair

**Interior Art:** Provided by Wizards of the Coast

**Cartography:** Mike Schley, Rich Lescouffair

**D&D Adventurers League Wizards Team:** Adam Lee, Ari Levitch, Chris Lindsay, Mike Mearls

**D&D Adventurers League Administrators:** Alan Patrick, Amy Lynn Dzura, Travis Woodall, Lysa Penrose, Claire Hoffman, Greg Marks

**Playtesters:** Chris McGovern, Daniel Chapman, Daniel Olivera, James Bowen, James Schweiss, Jennifer Griffith, Jonathan Reitz, Kyle Turner, Marcello Velazquez, Matt Suchyta, Michael McPherson, Sam Aldridge, Sam Robertson, Timothy Roberts, Travis Fuller

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## ESCAPE FROM ELTUREL

We've included the first part of the four-stage adventure from the ninth season of the D&D Adventurers League, DDAL09-01 *Escape from Elturel*, as a free download for Dragon+ readers. While all the adventures from the Inglorious Redemption campaign will be available on the Dungeon Masters Guild as usual following live play, they will also be available on D&D Beyond, Fantasy Grounds, and Roll20 for the first time.

[DOWNLOAD ESCAPE FROM ELTUREL](#)

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## FLIGHT PLAN

That won't be the only help players get as they make their way through the Nine Hells. Any player choosing tiefling or aasimar as their character's race has a choice when they reach fifth level: swap out an existing racial trait in order to sprout wings.



“That’s not something we’ve allowed in the past. But aasimar characters are like angels to the tiefling devils, and this storyline is so connected to the Nine Hells that we felt being more in touch with that plane enriches the experience,” Lindsay says.

“I also believe it’s a little bit devious on our part. If you’re flying in Avernus, you’re going to be a target for hell wasps and other creatures you wouldn’t normally attract. That’s going to make things even more problematic but it’s their choice to make.”

Beadle & Grimm are also getting in on the action with their **Premium Edition** of *Baldur’s Gate: Descent Into Avernus*. Their exclusive content for this campaign includes special awards that are specific to this storyline.

“One certificate the characters can get is called the *Hellrider’s Charge*. If one or more of the characters in the party are descended from hellriders, the certificate has an effect when they’re in Avernus allowing them to call upon the spirits of the hellriders once a day. These ghosts can intervene on their behalf and make them more difficult to hit for one round, which could be crucial. And it’s a nice connection to the hellriders you’re searching for.”

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## BONUS CONTENT

Adventurers League campaigns exist in addition to the main D&D storylines, supporting those hardcover releases. They can be played as an entirely separate series of adventures or used in addition to a major campaign to blend the stories together. Lindsay says running their development in parallel with the hardcover release makes for its own interesting challenge.

“Usually we follow on from the development of the hardcover campaign, and so we have to wait for them to get to a certain point with that content before we can actually start our work. We don’t know what we’re supporting until we know what we’re supporting! While it is challenging it’s also a lot of fun as we get to find really cool ways to expand the existing story and provide even more depth for players,” he explains.

“It’s basically the tabletop version of **DLC** and our players get very excited about that. They really enjoy the idea that they get a broader perspective of the setting and story and having that additional content to expand the world makes it feel special. If you’re participating in Adventurers League content and playing the hardcover adventure, you will have the deepest experience available.”

To get started with D&D Adventurers League play, download the AL

documentation from the **AL Player & DM pack**. Adventurers League adventures become available for general purchase from the **Dungeon Masters Guild** about one month after they premiere.



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# ESCAPE FROM ELTURGARD

## A Baldur's Gate Adventure

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# ADVENTURE PRIMER

“One can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only for one second without hope.”

— Charles Darwin

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st- to 2nd-level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 1**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

This adventure takes place on the outskirts of Elturel, the capital of Elturgard, which has recently been pulled into the Nine Hells.

## BACKGROUND

The city of **ELTUREL** and its residents have been abruptly pulled into **AVERNUS**, the first layer of the **NINE HELLS** and one of the battlegrounds of the eternal Blood War. Though the current fate of the city and its inhabitants remains unknown, the event devastated the city's surroundings, drawing other small villages and farms into the Hells and plunging the area into chaos.

Many who lived in the outskirts of the city were spared from the hellish calamity. With little hope of survival on their own, these refugees have banded together to form a **CARAVAN** headed to the nearby city of **BALDUR'S GATE** where they hope to find aid and shelter from the surrounding evil.

Seeking to ensure the safety of the refugees, a young woman named **DARA** is looking for heroes to rescue nearby survivors and recover resources that are integral to the caravan's survival.

## OVERVIEW

The adventure's story is spread over **five parts**: A **Call to Action** and four **1-hour mini-adventures**. The entire adventure takes approximately **4 hours** to play. If you're planning to play the whole adventure at once, you only need to introduce the Call to Action once. However, if you plan to play over several sessions, you'll want to revisit the **Call to Action** each time.

- **Call to Action: Evil Abounds!** The characters are asked to rescue refugees.
- **Part 1: The Smith.** The characters are tasked with recruiting a local smith and gathering whatever weapons and armor he's willing to lend. This is **Story Objective A**.
- **Part 2: The Miller.** The characters are recruited to recover supplies from Ippon's Mill and to convince a reclusive poet to join the caravan. This is **Story Objective B**.
- **Part 3: The Innkeeper.** The characters must venture to an inn and rescue any survivors, then bring them back to the caravan. This is **Story Objective C**.
- **Part 4: The Liar.** A refugee is killed during the night and the characters must discover the culprit. This is **Story Objective D**.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

In addition to the characters' individual backgrounds, the following hooks are possible ways to involve the adventurers in the scenario.

**Caravan Traveler.** The characters were part of a caravan, perhaps as guards or merchants, while passing through Elturgard on the way to Baldur's Gate. After the disappearance of the city, their caravan is quickly converted into a makeshift haven for refugees.

**Elturgardian Survivor.** One or more of the characters are from Elturgard, either as a resident of Elturel itself or from one of the surrounding villages. The sudden devastation of their homeland should spur them into action.

**Local Connections.** The characters were on the way to visit a dignitary, family member, friend, or mentor who resides in Elturgard. The city and surrounding villages were pulled into Avernus moments before they arrived at the city gates. With their personal connection gone, they are left to piece together what happened while helping those who survived.





## CALL TO ACTION: EVIL ABOUNDS!

**Estimated Duration:** 10 minutes

When the adventure begins, the characters have just witnessed the city of Elturel being pulled into the Nine Hells. Read or paraphrase the following:

It all happened so fast. Before your eyes, the Companion, a shining orb that shed its holy light upon Elturel, turned black, bathing the city in darkness. After the briefest of moments, all that remains of the city is a massive crater.

With the remnants of Elturgard in disarray, the characters are called upon to locate the survivors and escort them to the nearby caravan.

### MEETING WITH DARA

Take a couple of minutes (but no more than that) to describe what the characters see in the area as they wander and get their bearings. Before they can take any major action, they come upon an intact region of the city outskirts where they're approached by Dara and her two companions.

### CALL TO ACTION

Dara hopes the characters can help her locate survivors in specific areas and escort them back to the caravan before it leaves for Baldur's Gate.

#### DARK TIMES AND DARKER FATES

Along with introducing the characters to the storyline's personages and upcoming events, this adventure sets the theme for the campaign storyline. The overall tone should be dark, gritty, and brimming with looming uncertainty. Hope is in extremely short supply, and there are times when the characters themselves may be the only ones who can inspire that hope to the people of Elturgard.

#### AREA INFORMATION

Elturel's surroundings have the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** Nothing remains of Elturel but a crater at the edge of the cliff that overlooks the river. The area surrounding the city is made up of rocky terrain which slopes unevenly to the west of where Elturel once stood. The turbulent Chionthar River flows along the southern shoreline.

**Lighting.** During the day, there is a clear view of the outskirts south of the city's elevated cliff face. However, dust and smoke hangs overhead, making the area dimly lit.

**Smells and Sounds.** The smell of smoke and ash combined with several unrecognizable—yet distinctly disturbing—odors drift throughout the area. Locals nearby are calling out for other surviving friends and family.

**The Caravan.** Several refugees have already begun to gather near a small collection of carts, tents, and wagons that form a makeshift caravan. However, the number of survivors who have made it here is sparse compared to those still dealing with the fallout in nearby areas. Dara approaches the characters here.



## CREATURE INFORMATION

**Dara** is here. The elderly shepherd **Ghorin** stands protectively at her side, along with his goat **Clyde**.

**What Do They Want?** Dara is searching for others to accompany her to Baldur's Gate. In the meantime, she and Ghorin are gathering as many survivors as they can to make the trip to the city. Ghorin obeys the young woman unquestioningly and is willing to die to protect her.

**What Do They Know?** Dara knows that Elturel has been drawn into the Nine Hells, but doesn't know why or how. The young Chosen of Ilmater has been traveling for a long time en route to Baldur's Gate. She doesn't yet know the reason behind her pilgrimage, but is relieved to be nearing her destination. Clyde is disappointed in the quality of the grass to eat here.

**Fiends Everywhere.** Dara and Ghorin also speak of survivors who have seen devils roaming the area. They hope they have time to find and rescue more refugees before the fiends locate them.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

Dara provides the characters with three tasks—each of vital importance. Once these missions are complete, the refugee caravan can begin its journey to Baldur's Gate before being discovered by the invading devils.

The missions can be completed in any order. Dara's requests are as follows:

- **Part 1: The Smith.** Head to **Wellum's Smithy**, recruit the local smith and recover as many weapons there as possible.

- **Part 2: The Miller.** Speak with Ghorin before venturing to **Ippon's Mill** to gather any tools and supplies that can be found there.
- **Part 3: The Innkeeper.** Journey to a nearby inn, the **Fabled Fawn**, and escort the inn's proprietor and patrons back to the caravan.

### PROCEEDING TO PART 4: THE LIAR

Characters can't pursue **Part 4: The Liar** until they've completed **Parts 1, 2, and 3**, above.



DARA



GHORIN



## PART 1: THE SMITH

**Estimated Duration:** 60 minutes

With the long road to Baldur's Gate still ahead of them, the characters venture to Wellum's Smithy. Their goal is to gather weapons and materials to protect the caravan, and possibly even recruit the renowned smith himself.

### A. WELLUM'S SMITHY

The journey to the smithy is uneventful, but the characters soon find that their task is far from over.

#### STORY OBJECTIVE A

Recruiting **Wellum Smith** and recovering his stolen weapons is **Story Objective A**.

#### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The smithy is an old building at the end of a dirt road bordered by a low stone wall. A wooden sign outside reads "Wellum's Smithy." The only other building nearby is a small shed with a missing door.

**Lighting and Sounds.** It is unusually quiet here. The typical noise one would expect in the vicinity of a smith's forge is curiously absent. The sky is filled with dust and smoke and the area is dimly lit.

#### CREATURE INFORMATION

Wellum (chaotic good male human **soldier**) is the local smith here, along with his assistant, Gordrick (lawful good male dwarf **scout**). The smithy was just looted by bandits, so Wellum and Gordrick are planning their next move, whispering in case the bandits return.

As you approach, a deep voice calls out from the building:  
"If you've come back to steal more, you're going to have to go through me!"

After Wellum describes his predicament, a female half-elf named **Vollis Foote** arrives at the smithy, breathlessly seeking shelter from some bandits she's eluded in the area.

**What Do They Want?** With his livelihood gone, **Wellum** is beside himself and unsure of where to go next. He makes a point to complain about the bandits "making off with my stash of ale!" at least once. While he is willing to accompany the characters back to the caravan, he insists that they recover his wares from the bandits: "the caravan'll need all the help it can get!"

**Vollis** is actually a **cult fanatic** who has her own plans once she's joined the caravan that are revealed in **Part 4**, though the characters don't learn this until then; she's very careful to avoid any undue suspicion. If confronted, she admits that she has, in truth, been pilfering the homes left abandoned by fleeing residents in the area and offers a handful of coins and worthless baubles as proof.

**What Do They Know?** The bandits looted the smithy after Wellum went home to gather supplies after Elturel's destruction. The bandits tied up Gordrick (who is still rubbing a sizeable knot on the top of his head) and took all the weapons and tools, leaving nothing but scraps. Gordrick describes the bandits, who were wearing mottled green and black cloaks. They were long gone by the time Wellum returned.

Vollis had been making her way toward the caravan but was ambushed by the bandits. She confirms Gordrick's description of mottled green and black cloaks. Vollis is a member of the Cult of Zariel operating in Baldur's Gate and has been tasked with killing very specific people that live in the outskirts of the city—though she doesn't reveal any of this, even under magical compulsion.

### RUN TO THE HILLS

The characters can follow the bandits to recover the stolen weapons, but Wellum and Gordrick are reluctant to accompany them. Although Wellum may know how to swing a sword, neither he nor Gordrick are adventurers. While the characters leave to track the bandits to their hideout, the smith and his apprentice gather what remains at the smithy and head to the caravan. Similarly, Vollis points out the hideout's general direction, but follows Wellum and Gordrick to the caravan.

Following Vollis' directions, the party finds the hideout within the hour. Refer to **map 2.1** for locations.

## B1. HIDEOUT ENTRANCE

Faded traces of an old dirt road lead to this building, an abandoned temple repurposed by the bandits.

### AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The building is a single-story structure with the remains of a small statue garden beside it. A character that succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies the symbology of Torm among the faded markings and old displays, suggesting that this place was once a temple to the god of duty and loyalty. One of the two wooden doors leading into the building is ajar.

**Lighting.** The sky is filled with dust and smoke and the area is dimly lit. The building is nestled close to a hillside which casts deep shadows throughout the day, the deepest of which might obscure any creatures lurking within.

## B2. ENTRY HALL

Once adorned with tapestries and decorations, small bits of wood and shattered pottery are all that remain in this small chamber.

### AREA INFORMATION

The entry hall has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** This 20-foot-square room is dirty, dusty, and mostly empty. However, footprints in the dust indicate that there has been a lot of traffic passing through here recently. A set of bronze-bound **double doors** are set against the north wall. The doors lead nowhere, but they are **trapped** to alert the bandits on the floor to any intruders. A small **font** in the northeast corner is the only piece of décor left intact.

**Lighting.** There is enough natural light filtering through the windows and door from the outside to provide dim light in this area.

**Trapped Doors.** The double doors to the north are armed with a pulley trap that triggers when someone attempts to open them. The trap can be spotted with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check and disarmed with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. A failed attempt triggers the trap.

The 10-foot-wide area of the ceiling above the doorway collapses if the trap is triggered. Creatures within the area must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. In addition, the rubble knocks open the door concealed by the **font** and alerts the bandits and cultists in **area B3**.

**Holy Water Font.** A half-moon-shaped stone font is set into the east wall, near the double doors. The edges and interior of the bowl are stained with what looks like dried blood, and a small knife sits precariously on the rim of the bowl. The phrase "Offer and Pass Freely" is carved into the stonework above the font. Characters with a passive Perception of 13 or higher notice an increase of foot traffic in the dusty prints along the floor here—more so than by the nearby doors.

The font conceals a **door**, which can be found and opened with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Characters that noticed the footprints in the dust on the floor can make this check with advantage. The door is opened by pushing against the font.

The knife and bloody bowl are there in the hopes of distracting intruders toward the trapped door nearby. A character making an "offering" using the knife takes 1 slashing damage, but the offering does nothing.

### WHERE'S THE DOOR?

If the characters are taking a long time in this area, or if they successfully disarmed the trap without finding the concealed door, you can choose to have them simply notice the outline of the concealed door around the font with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check.

## B3. RITUAL CHAMBER

The bandits that dwell here are members of an infernal cult who are fascinated with the forces that drew Eturel into the Nine Hells. They are in the midst of a sacrificial summoning ritual. Beyond the concealed door, a flight of narrow steps leads into the ritual chamber below. Upon entering the chamber, read:

Atop a blood-soaked stone slab is a human, bound by chains and surrounded by humanoids wearing mottled green and black robes. One of them is in the process of carving a symbol in the man's chest with a jagged knife, while the others chant in haunting tones.

### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The walls of this 40-foot-diameter cavern are covered in infernal sigils and markings. A stone altar takes up the center of the room. The stairwell on the east wall leads up to area B2.

**Lighting.** Decorative braziers to the north and south ends of the chamber cast bright light throughout the area.

**Smells and Sounds.** There is a faint sulfurous smell in the cavern. Even when the cultists are no longer chanting, faint whispers seem to carry along the air, seemingly from nowhere. The man bound to the altar whimpers in agony.

#### CREATURE INFORMATION

Three **bandits** and two **cultists** are in the middle of a ritual sacrifice of a fellow **cultist**.

#### ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Weak:** The cultists don't conjure the **spined devil**.
- **Strong:** Replace a **cultist** with a **cult fanatic**.
- **Very Strong:** Replace the **weakened spined devil** with a **spined devil**.

If the characters triggered the trap in area B2, the cultists have had enough time to complete the summoning ritual. As the characters enter the area, the bound cultist dies as a **weakened spined devil** tears its way out of the corpse.

**What Do They Want?** The **bandits** and **cultists** are focused on their ritual. Unless the party approaches stealthily, the cultists notice the characters as they're descending the stairwell and attack while one of the cultists remains at the altar.

**What Do They Know?** The bandits and cultists are members of the cult of Dispater and are just as confused about Elturel's descent into the Hells as anyone else. The ritual sacrifice is intended to divine the cause of Elturel's fall, and to summon a powerful fiend to protect them.

#### TREASURE

In the south end of the room, covered in tarps, are boxes filled with Wellum's inventory of weapons and supplies. A small bag containing a *potion of healing* sits atop one of the small boxes. One of the cultists wears some modest silver jewelry, while others have gold and silver coins in purses.

#### PLAYING THE PILLARS

Here are some suggestions for this encounter:

**Combat.** If the cultists haven't already summoned the spined devil, the bandits and most of the cultists attack the characters, while one of them stays behind to complete the ritual. If the cultist uses its action every round to plunge the sacrificial dagger into the victim, after two rounds they will kill the offering and conjure the devil, who appears at the end of the third round.

**Exploration.** A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check made during combat spots the stolen weapons, hidden under tarps in the south corner of the room.

**Social.** If the **spined devil** is conjured during the fight, it is unsure why it was summoned. Moreover, if the cultist who summoned it is killed, a character that makes a successful DC 14 Charisma (Deception) check can persuade the fiend that there is no worthy bargain to be struck, after which the devil simply leaves. A character that speaks in Infernal makes this check with advantage. On a failed check, the devil suspects that the characters are trying to trick it and attacks them.

## WRAP UP

Wellum rejoices at the recovery of his weapons. Even Dara cracks a smile. Wellum, Gordrick, and Vollis opt to join the caravan and help them on their way to Baldur's Gate.

From here, the characters can proceed to **Part 2: The Miller**, **Part 3: The Innkeeper**, or—if the characters have completed **Parts 1, 2, and 3**—to **Part 4: The Liar**.



## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs feature prominently in this chapter. **Vollis Foote (VOE liss FOOT).** Female half-elf. Another out-of-towner, Vollis is a cultist of Zariel in the service of a devil named Gharizol. She's been dispatched from Baldur's Gate to hide among and spy upon the refugees.

- **What do They Want?** Vollis is secretly a cultist of Zariel in search for a specific sort of prey—descendants of Hellriders.
- **A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing:** Vollis is a perfect actor—skilled in guile and possessive of a silver tongue.

**Wellum Smith (WELL uhm).** Male human. Smithy from the same village as the Halls. He and Vollis are likely the only two refugees that are competent with a sword.

- **What do They Want:** Besides a drink? Wellum is eager to help the refugees get to Baldur's Gate and is willing to donate his wares to accomplish this. However, he does expect a bit of compensation once they get there.
- **Just a Nip to Take the Edge Off:** A bit too fond of the drink; the lack of booze has had him on edge, he's secretly stashed away a bottle of wine that he found.

**Gordrick Ironarm (GORE drick).** Male dwarf. Wellum's assistant. Has shaved his beard regularly since his exile from his home in the Spine of the World. Forlorn and prone to bouts of despondent depression since arriving as he feels he will die without having redeemed his family's honor. Tight-lipped about the circumstances behind his exile.

- **What do They Want:** Gordrick is eager to help the refugees, excited for the chance to visit Baldur's Gate for a good cause.
- **Path of Redemption:** Gordrick strives to redeem his family's honor but feels very much out of his depth in the current events. He hopes being with Wellum and the caravan can keep him from getting killed before he can find a way to return home.



VOLLIS



WELLUM



GORDRICK





## CREATURE STATISTICS

This appendix details creatures that are encountered in this adventure.

### BANDIT

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-lawful alignment

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

### ACTIONS

**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

**Light Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

### CULTIST

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Deception +2, Religion +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Dark Devotion.** The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

### ACTIONS

**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

### CULT FANATIC

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

**Armor Class** 13 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d8 + 6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

**Skills** Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Dark Devotion.** The fanatic has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

**Spellcasting.** The fanatic is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). The fanatic has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, inflict wounds, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, spiritual weapon*

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The fanatic makes two melee attacks.

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

### SPINED DEVIL

Small fiend (devil), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 22 (5d6 + 5)

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

**Damage Resistances** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede the devil's darkvision.

**Flyby.** The devil doesn't provoke an opportunity attack when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

**Limited Spines.** The devil has twelve tail spines. Used spines regrow by the time the devil finishes a long rest.

**Magic Resistance.** The devil has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The devil makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its fork or two with its tail spines.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) slashing damage.

**Fork.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

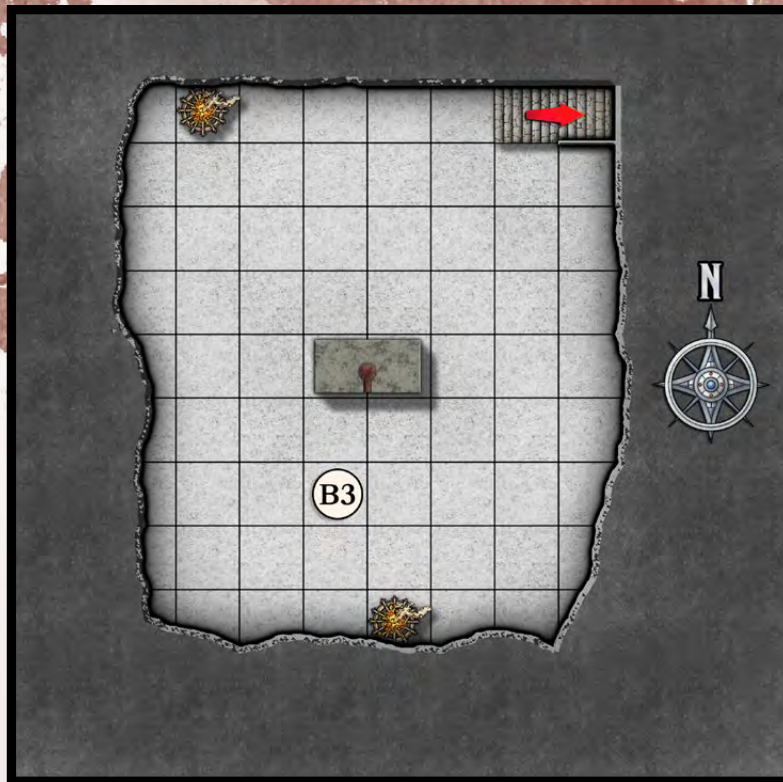
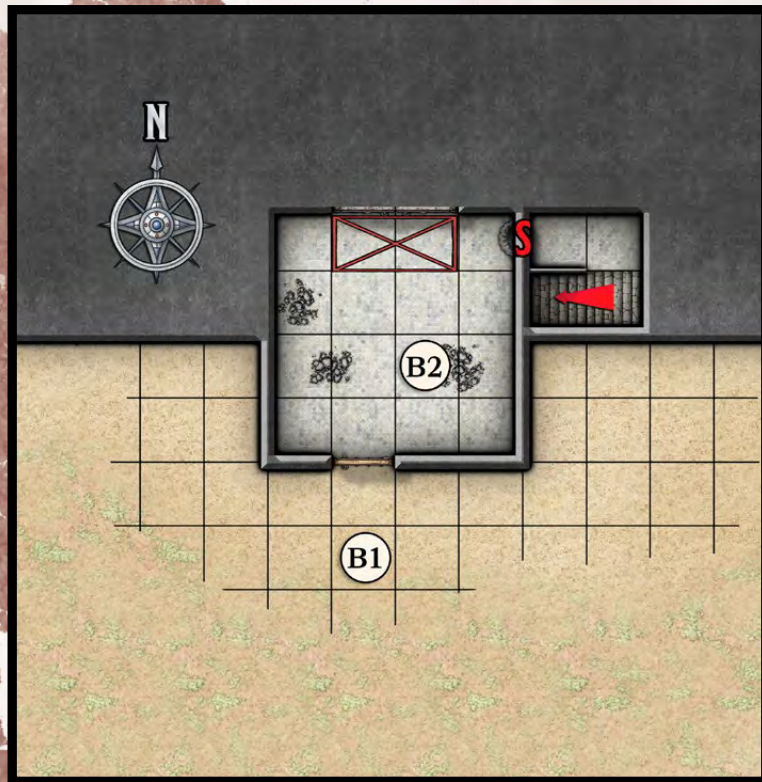
**Tail Spine.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/80 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

#### VARIANT: WEAKENED SPINED DEVIL

This version of the spined devil has the following alterations to its stat block.

- Remove its Damage Resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered (it still keeps its resistance to cold damage)
- Remove the Magic Resistance trait.
- Challenge Rating is reduced to 1 (200 XP)

# MAP 2.1: BANDIT'S HIDEOUT



# The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

This issue we highlight mental health initiatives in gaming and celebrate Eberron's artificers and the constructs and vehicles they create.

Shawn Merwin



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## ALL THE LOVELY TOYS...

It's been an amazing year for releases already, but with *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* and new **Eberron adventures** both still coming to a FLGS near you, players and Dungeon Masters still have so much great content to look forward to in 2019.

Two of the most exciting elements from those products are the

constructs and vehicles—and the artificers who create them. Whether it's the infernal war machines of Avernus or the airships and lightning rails of Eberron, vehicles can add a lot of excitement—and even more danger—to your game. Below we examine some DMs Guild products that play off those concepts.

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The Greasemonkey's Handbook,  
by Vall Syrene and Mogman  
Dubloon

Price: \$9.99 (PDF), \$36.99  
(Hardcover)

*The Greasemonkey's Handbook* is a professional-looking, 119-page product whose wonderful layout and copious amounts of art make the hardcover edition worthy of consideration. The handbook boasts twelve class archetypes, fifty-one spells (including the new magical school of “automation”), three feats, forty-seven magic items, twenty-two weapons, and

much more.

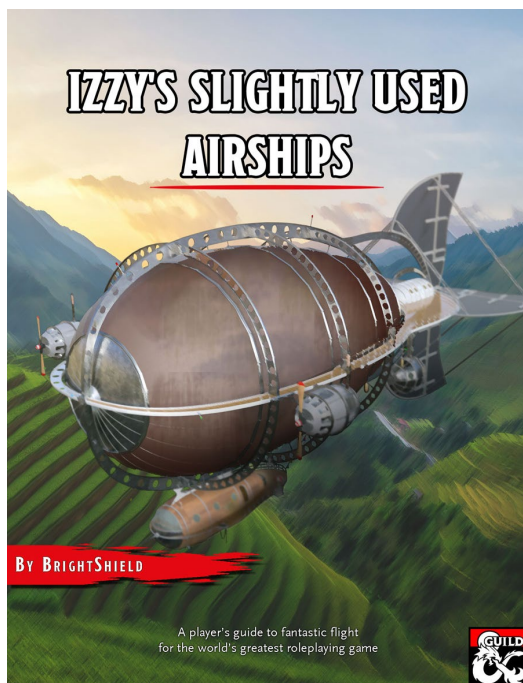
The most striking aspect of the book, however, is its rules for creating and using ATUMs: all terrain utility machines. The exhaustive and ingenious descriptions and mechanics of ATUMs in this supplement make it a treasure trove for DMs and players who want to run a game with vehicles—from fantasy-based magic-infused transports to full steampunk or sci-fi versions. Rules are presented for building and equipping a vehicle, arming it with both melee and ranged weapons, and balancing encounters where the characters have an ATUM at their disposal.

[MORE INFO](#)

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Izzy's Slightly Used Airships, by  
BrightShield

Price: \$4.99 (PDF)



Contrasting the heavy mechanics and fine detail of *The Greasemonkey's Handbook*, *Izzy's Slightly Used Airships* takes a fast and flavorful look at using these airborne contraptions in a campaign. Mechanics are certainly present: a new feat (air vehicle operation), new background (aviator), and new equipment provide player options for a campaign that wants to dabble in airship play. There are also six

airships described, each with its own backstory and stats, which can be easily pulled into a campaign without a great deal of work needed by DMs or players.

[MORE INFO](#)

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## ...AND THE ARTIFICERS WHO MAKE THEM

The artificer class has been getting a polish ahead of the Eberron release, and fans have gotten to witness the changes in its design through [Unearthed Arcana](#) articles. As the designers of this uniquely Eberron class have been so open and generous with their thoughts, anyone with an interest in the artificer has been able to design and display their own creations on the DMs Guild. Sharing ideas only enhances creativity, and the products below serve as interesting additions to that larger conversation.

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Construct Compendium, by  
Brandon Norris and Richie Root  
Price: \$7.95 (PDF)  
This supplement's seventy-five  
pages highlight sentient



constructs, machines, and mechanical doings, catering to both players and DMs. The players get four new races—including our personal favorite, the rogue modron. The twelve new subclasses range from the barbarian to the wizard, all with an artificer's tinge. If you've been wondering if it's possible to bring artificer flavor to a paladin or a

rogue, *Construction Compendium* achieves this with an eye toward the fantastical.

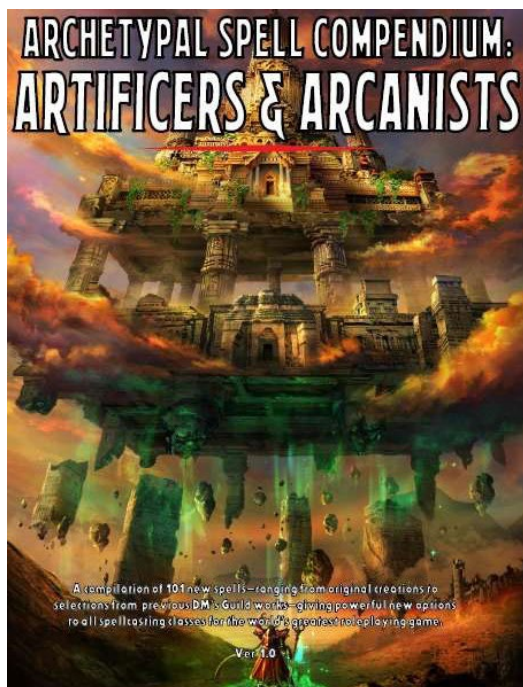
On the DM side, the book offers twenty-six new monster constructs to challenge your players, as well as custom golem creation rules to tempt, challenge, or reward the crafters at your tables. Add a number of feats, spells, and magic items, and you have an offering that can grease the proverbial gears of any campaign.

## MORE INFO

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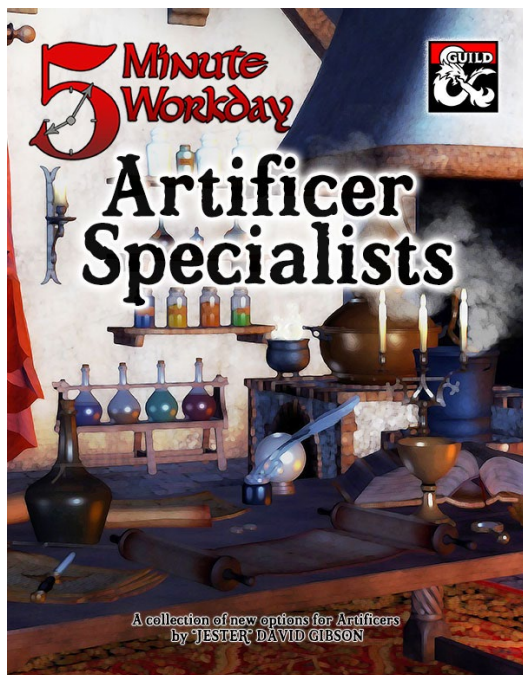
Archetypal Spell Compendium:  
Artificers and Arcanists, by  
Jeremy Forbing  
Price: \$9.95 (PDF)

If magic is your vice of choice, and artificers are where it's at, this is a must-buy. The supplement opens with four new subclasses for the Unearthed Arcana artificer: clockwork engineer; arcane sleuth; eradicator; and prodigy. There are also new subclasses for the cleric, sorcerer, and wizard.



The meat of the book, however, rests with the 101 new spells for artificers and other spellcasting classes. Interesting and informative sidebars are provided for some of the spells, adding some nicely crafted narrative punch to their mechanical weight.

[MORE INFO](#)



5MWD Presents: Artificer Specialists, by David Gibson  
Price: \$0.50 (PDF)

We love DMs Guild content like this: concise, easy to digest, and affordable to all. One of many products in the *5 Minute Workday* collection, this offers four artificer subclasses and five new magic items. Even if the final version of the artificer shows significant changes from the UA version, these subclasses are flavorful and solid enough to fit thematically.

[MORE INFO](#)

# CREATOR Q&A

Bill Benham is a creator, producer, veteran, and mental health advocate. His expertise in the field of games and his passion for mental health led to the creation of *Gardens of Fog*, a D&D adventure whose proceeds help support the emotional needs of the gaming community through the **Take This nonprofit**. He discusses his love of the game and shares his Eberron adventure, which you can download for free during the lifetime of this issue.

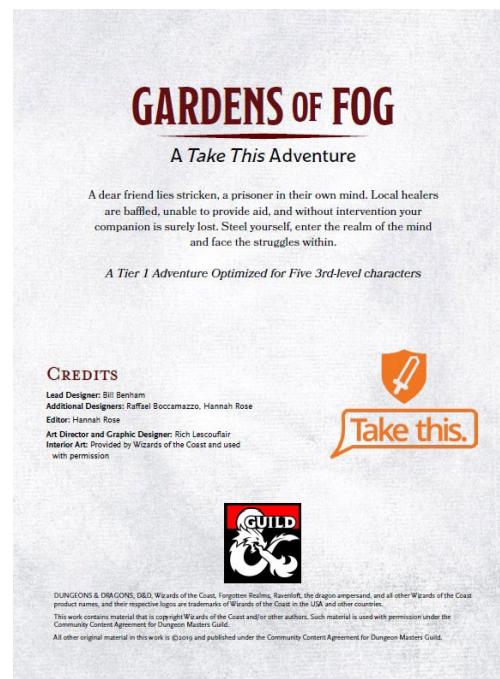
## More about Gardens of Fog

How long have you been playing D&D and what draws you to the game?

I started playing in 1981 with a neighborhood friend in Littleton, Colorado. His older brother had the *Basic Set* and took us through part of *In Search of the Unknown*. Turns out he didn't actually know how to play D&D in the conventional sense, but that didn't matter.

I'm drawn to the game because it's an amazing exercise in creative thought, both as the DM or a player. It's rejuvenating being able to express myself creatively in a collaborative way. I especially enjoy being a DM, as that allows me to help other people tell a story and make fun memories together. The greatest friendships I've forged in my life have been through D&D. There's no other game quite like it and I'll be forever grateful that I found it. I was a skinny, awkward, shy kid that had a hard time connecting with other people. D&D served as a conduit that allowed me to interact with others and express myself in ways that I couldn't at school or on the playground.

When did you first become involved in creating content for D&D and what was your path to working at Wizards of the Coast?





I started creating D&D content in 2005 with the Living Greyhawk campaign, and then became a regional administrator for the campaign. I had a similar role at the launch of Living Forgotten Realms when 4e was launched, and I subsequently applied for an administrator position in the Adventurer's League. When I was accepted for that position it became a major part of what I did in my free time.

I am now an associate producer for the D&D team. I work with the lead designer of a book or project to coordinate all the services and components needed to get it from the idea stage to printed material. I even get to contribute creatively, which is wonderful.

I was a soldier and later a healthcare administrator before joining the Wizards team. In fact, my previous position was as a clinical director for a nonprofit that focuses on medical and psychological management of opiate addiction. It really drove home just how much mental health is tied to overall physical health.

Tell us about the inspiration for *Gardens of Fog*?

*Gardens of Fog* centers on a group of adventurers helping a mutual friend overcome a malign force manipulating their mental state. The party must enter their friend's mindscape and help drive out the intruding entity if their friend is to have any chance of recovery. The core concept is not unlike *Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors*. Though there is, sadly, no Dokken soundtrack to this adventure. All proceeds benefit **Take This**, a 501c3 nonprofit whose mission is to decrease the stigma of, and increase the support for, mental health in the game enthusiast community and inside the game industry. It's a fantastic group, and I'm happy to be able to support their mission while doing something I love.

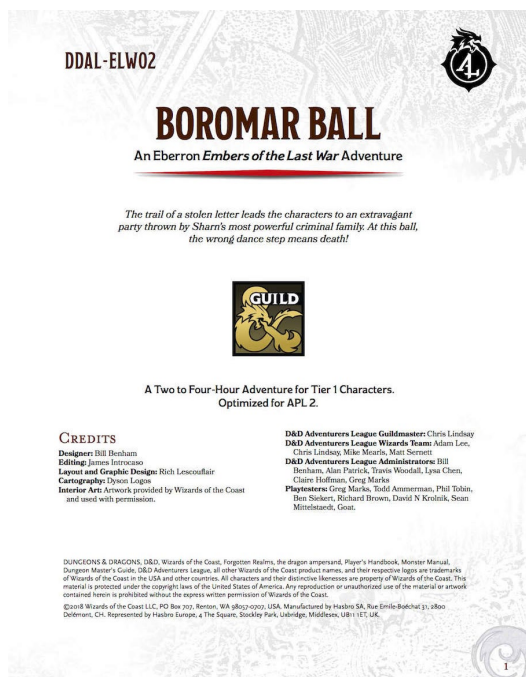
Why is mental health so important to you?

I've worked in healthcare since 1993 when I joined the Army as a combat medic. In 1997 I completed training as an occupational therapy assistant and worked in both inpatient and outpatient mental health settings. I also completed specialized training for the care and management of combat stress casualties. In that time, I saw two things. First, mental health issues are pervasive and have tremendous impact on us as individuals and as a society. Second, there is a great deal of stigma surrounding mental health treatment that must be

addressed.

I've been in treatment for anxiety, depression, and PTSD for years, and that treatment has helped me tremendously. I want everyone to have that opportunity. If this adventure helps one person seek out behavioral treatment or gives them the tools that they need to help a friend seek out treatment, that's a major win as far as I'm concerned.

It's been heartening to see how much folks are willing to be open and discuss their challenges with mental health. One of the first things I learned is that talking about the things that make you anxious or depressed is a major first step in helping manage them. Mental health isn't a "one and done" kind of thing. You don't just fix it. It's a lifelong journey, and it takes effort. If D&D helps make that journey bearable for some, I'm happy to help them along the way!



What other D&D projects have you have worked on?

I've authored several Epic adventures for the D&D Adventurer's League, which don't appear on the DMs Guild but can be requested through the AL team. They're a hoot! I've also worked on a creature supplement for *Shadow of the Demon Lord* with Robert Schwalb, and I wrote *DDAL-ELW02 Boromar Ball* as the second adventure in the *Embers of the Last War* storyline. I've also had the honor of contributing to the upcoming

Eberon campaign setting that was announced in June, as well as *Dungeon of the Mad Mage*, *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*, and some upcoming products I can't talk about just yet.

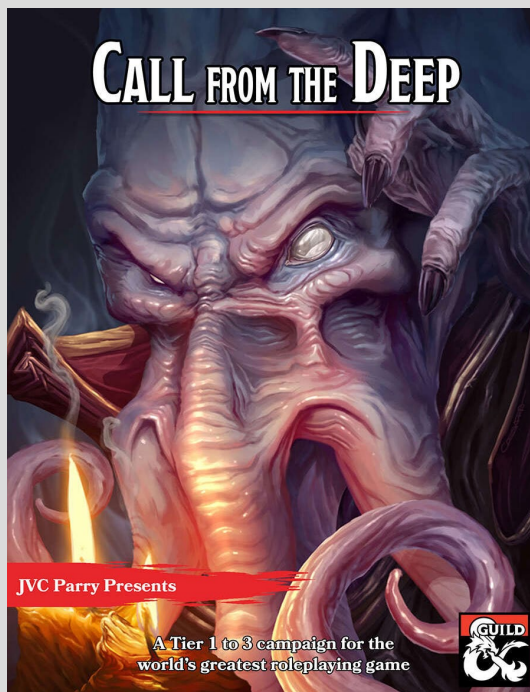
## DOWNLOAD THE BOROMAR BALL PDF

You can find more information about Take This at the [official website](#) and connect with the organization on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). Visit [the DMs Guild](#) to see more content from Bill Benham.

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## GUEST EDITOR'S PICK

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J.V.C. Parry's recent addition *Call From The Deep* is very cool. A crashed alien vessel leads to an urban investigation and while experienced players may realize where this story will end up, it is still a lot of fun. It includes a fabulous wink to the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies and the menacing and maniacal mind flayers are always a treat when presented properly.

-Chris Boyce

[MORE INFO](#)

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## DESIGN THOUGHT: DESIGNING WITHOUT ARTIFICE

Of all the non-core classes, the artificer is one of the most popular, most controversial, and one of the hardest to get right. Creating an artificer can be a very delicate process. If you make it too much like an existing class, it is more stable but less mechanically and thematically unique. Yet if you go too far afield of existing class mechanics, you make something wholly new and exciting but often at the risk of unbalancing the mechanics of the game.

From the very first presentation of the artificer in the original Eberron book, the mandate for the class is made clear: "In Eberron, magic is almost like technology." As you create your own subclasses and

powers for artificers, always keep that in mind. Even if the mechanics change, the heart of the class is intact if you maintain this guiding principle.

Game designer and editor Shawn Merwin's professional work on Dungeons & Dragons has ranged from third to fifth edition, showing up in sourcebooks, adventures, articles, and Organized Play administration. His most recent works include writing and design credits on *Acquisitions Incorporated* and *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*.



BACK TO TOP



# BOROMAR BALL

An Eberron *Embers of the Last War* Adventure

*The trail of a stolen letter leads the characters to an extravagant party thrown by Sharn's most powerful criminal family. At this ball, the wrong dance step means death!*



A Two to Four-Hour Adventure for Tier 1 Characters.  
Optimized for APL 2.

## CREDITS

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# ADVENTURE PRIMER

*"It's important to take time for family, for the little things, Goran. Have a drink, you're so tense! You'd think you were in trouble or something"*

—Saidan Boromar, Patriarch of the Boromar Clan, moments before defenestrating a local merchant for skimming smuggling profits

## BACKGROUND

Three days ago, **BOROMAR CLAN** agent **YEQ THE GRIN** murdered a courier and stole an encoded message to **MERRIX D'CANNITH** from an agent of the Swords of Liberty. Before his apprehension by adventurers and subsequent incarceration, Yeq managed to pass the stolen message along to another **BOROMAR CLAN** agent.

The Boromar Clan is holding the message at a heavily guarded villa, **FAR HEARTH**, in the **MIDDLE MENTHIS PLATEAU** and it is only a matter of time before they decipher it. However, in two days, **COUNCILOR ILYRA BOROMAR** is hosting a cultural gala at this villa to celebrate her kith and kin from the Talenta Plains. This would be an ideal time to infiltrate the villa and recover the message that has caused all this trouble. First though, **WATCHMAN KAVILL** calls the party together with dire news.

## EPISODES

The adventure is spread over **three to five episodes** that takes approximately **two to four hours** to play. These episodes are initially introduced by a Call to Action episode.

If you're planning to play the entire adventure at once, you only need to introduce the Call to Action once. However, if you plan to play them over several sessions, you'll want to revisit the Call to Action each time you play.

- **Episode 1: What Happens in Cogsgate.** The characters just beat a murder rap with the Sharn City Watch and the Boromar Clan knows they're involved. They need to recover the stolen message to understand what is going on. This is the **Call to Action**.
- **Episode 2: Crashing a Party.** The characters only know that the Boromar's are involved and that they have the message. The party must find out where the message is being kept and how they intend to retrieve it. This is **Main Objective A**.
- **Episode 3: The Caper.** The party executes their plan to recover the message without dying or being captured by the Boromar Clan. This is **Main Objective B**.

## BONUS OBJECTIVES

This adventure includes two bonus objectives that the characters can pursue if they have additional time to do so—earning additional **advancement checkpoints** (but no treasure checkpoints) in the process. These bonus objectives are found in this adventure's appendices, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A: Daask in the Moonlight.** While planning to recover the message, the party learns of a bombing plot orchestrated by the Daask crime syndicate that is set to occur at the ball. If Daask succeeds the message could be destroyed! This bonus objective is in **Appendix 4**.
- **Bonus Objective B: Quid Pro Quo.** The party must flee Middle Menthis with the Boromars hot on their tails. This bonus objective is in **Appendix 5**.

## EPISODE SEQUENCE

Depending on your time constraints, and play style and environment, this adventure will take approximately two to four hours to play.

## HOW WILL YOU PLAY?

The duration of your session depends on how much of this adventure you utilize. At the very least, your session will last approximately 2 hours. However, if you wish, you can provide a longer experience for your players by pursuing the bonus objectives.

**Main Objectives Only.** To complete the adventure's main objective, the characters participate in Episodes 1 through 3 in order, however, you may include the opportunity to pursue bonus objectives.

**Bonus Objectives.** You can extend this adventure by one or two hours by including opportunities for the characters to pursue the bonus objectives.

These objectives branch off episode 2 and 3, but their order is fluid. They set the scene for the final episode and may even have an impact on the events that transpire.

### A PIECE OF HOME

The Boromar villa, Far Hearth, is in a unique neighborhood known as the Little Plains, part of the Middle Menthis Plateau. It is unique for several reasons, the most obvious of which is the architecture. The towers are cave-like with broad, grass-lined roads reaching outside rather than tucked inside as in most of the city. The use of wood and bone in the traditional Talenta style also dominates most dwellings here. Lastly, the population of Little Plains is largely halfling, both urban and from the plains, along with a smattering of gnomes and kobolds that causes non-residents of a taller stature to stand out.

# ADVENTURE FLOWCHART

This section provides a basic understanding of not only the flow of the episode, but also the outline of the different paths that your players may take in reaching their stated objective.





# EPISODE ONE: WHAT HAPPENS IN COGSGATE

**Estimated Duration:** 30 minutes

It has been three days since the party beat a murder rap and captured the killer, Yeq the Grin. The party is summoned to meet Watchman Kavill at a small café in the lower Central Plateau so he can inform them of Yeq's death in prison and what it portends for them.

## PLAYING OUT OF ORDER

If your party did not play *Murder in Skyway*, there are other ways to kick this adventure off. The party could be friends with Watchman Kavill or be working with House Orien to recover the lost message.

## AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The lower Central Plateau is residential and quiet. Heavily armed folk or boisterous folks draw a speedy response from the Sharn Watch.

**Lighting.** Normal illumination during the day keeps the area brightly lit. At night there is ample street lighting with many pockets of darkness.

## WHAT MIGHT THEY ALREADY KNOW?

It's possible the party learned quite a bit from Yeq in the previous adventure. Here's a summary of what they may already know (and what Watchman Kavill may know):

- Characters who completed **Bonus Objective B: An Exchange of Information** in *Murder in Skyway* know the letter came from a senior agent of the Church of the Silver Flame (but really it was a member of the Swords of Liberty).
- The letter is coded in a complex cypher that does not yield to magic.

## CREATURES/NPCs

Watchman Kavill (LG male human **guard**) is a more junior member of the City Watch with a good heart and a desire to do right. Think of the earnest young "beat cop" in a crime drama.

**Objectives/Goals.** Kavill is deeply concerned for the character's safety following the apparent murder of Yeq the Grin in prison. If the party is already aware of this information, he carries forward with his warning

and provides what addition details he can. He does not materially assist the party moving forward outside of relaying information to his Watch Commander. Kavill is not a vigilante but does call in the Watch if he's presented with probable cause.

**What Does He Know?** Kavill is aware of the following information, which he readily shares:

- Yeq was poisoned in his cell last night, most likely from his evening meal.
- Kavill overheard his Watch Sergeant say it was probably the Boromars making sure Yeq didn't spill whatever he knew in prison.
- Kavill is aware of a coded letter that Yeq says he passed off to a Boromar agent. Yeq claims that something that delicate would end up being kept in a Boromar-owned villa, in Little Plains district on Middle Menthis Plateau.
- He knows a fence and occasional informant, a halfling who goes by the name Timbal Grasseeth, that is familiar with the villa.
- The informant, Timbal, can be found at a pub in Little Plains named the Zephyr in the next couple hours. Tell him Kavill sent you.
- Whatever is in that letter must be very important to the Boromars, enough to kill for. Kavill is deeply concerned the Boromar Clan will come for the characters next.

## CALL TO ACTION


The objective of this adventure is to find the coded message Yeq handed off to the Boromar Clan. It provides leverage to keep Boromar assassins away and is obviously important enough to kill for.

### THE BOROMAR CLAN

The largest criminal organization in Sharn, the Boromar Clan runs a massive network of smuggling, gambling, extortion, blackmail, racketeering, and graft. While all races are welcome, only halflings occupy the higher echelons of the organization. The organization is very similar to the mafia and exudes the same vibe of neighborhood "friendliness" with a veneer of menace. The organization uses whatever force is necessary to accomplish its objectives but prefers to operate out of sight and handle things discreetly.







## EPISODE TWO: CRASHING A PARTY

**Estimated Duration:** 30 minutes

In this section, the party must learn about the Boromar Villa and come up with a plan to retrieve the letter. Watchman Kavill provided a contact with information about the villa, should the party not wish to speak with him, allow them to make appropriate skill checks to discern the information on their own. Here are a few bits of information should the party wish to do a little snooping before meeting with Timbal.

### DC 10 (EASY)

- Intelligence (Investigation): Searching public records indicates a posh villa named Far Hearth fits the location and is held by the Boromar family.
- Charisma (Persuasion/Deception/Intimidation): Word around Little Plains is a big party is happening at the Boromar villa tomorrow.

### DC 15 (MEDIUM)

- Intelligence (Investigation): There has been an increase in security at the villa in the last day consisting of hard looking hunters from the Talenta Plains.

### OBJECTIVES

In this episode the party must:

- Locate the Boromar villa
- Come up with a plan to retrieve the letter

#### DAASK, RIVALS OF THE BOROMAR

Comprised of monstrous immigrants from the lands of Droaam, Daask is a crime syndicate that specializes in extortion, violent crime, and illicit substances. Not as large or organized as the Boromar Clan, Daask has a flat hierarchy and smaller infrastructure, and can apply brute force to problems selectively with great result.

### BONUS OBJECTIVES

During their investigation the party learns of a plot by members of the Daask crime syndicate to bomb the gala. This could be an informant, an overheard conversation, whatever works best for your group. This is **Bonus Objective A: Daask in the Moonlight**, located in Appendix 4.

#### ROLEPLAYING TIMBAL

Timbal is a smart-aleck that dislikes physical violence. He's a cunning fence and decent thief who would like to get paid for as little effort as possible. He is not a member of the Boromar Clan and resents having to pay them dues for protection. This is his way of sticking it to them. His personality is a combination pawn shop owner/insufferable barista with a smidgen of charm.





## SCENE A. THE ZEPHYR

If the party decides to meet with Timbal they have a couple hours to rest and run errands.

### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The Zephyr is a small pub, 60 feet by 80 feet, catering to working class folk, mostly urban halflings. The furnishings reflect this and can be awkward for medium size folk.

**Lighting.** Smokey and dimly lit by a pair of *everbright lanterns*.

### CREATURES/NPCs

Timbal Grasstooth (N male halfling **spy**), a fence affiliated with the Boromars, presents an opportunity for a silly conversation that yields results. He can also be a good way to give **Bonus Objective A: Daask in the Moonlight** to the party.

**Objectives/Goals.** Timbal has never left Sharn in all his 26 years. He is lazy, vain, and generally interested in being comfortable. He freelances as an informant for the Watch to curry favor in case he gets in trouble and get rid of rivals. He learned about some special letter at Far Hearth villa from one of the cooks and figured he'd try to sell the information. He's interested in sharing what he knows, getting paid, and then pretending the characters don't exist.

**What Does He Know?** Timbal says he has a contact who overheard the letter would be kept at Far Hearth. He also has low-level knowledge of the Boromar criminal enterprise and knows that there are trusted guards and arcane wards securing the villa. He relates that a cultural gala occurring tomorrow might be a good time to sneak in. He has a sketch of the grounds with guard and ward locations he's willing to part with for 50 gp, preferably in precious stones. He can be bartered down to 30 gp as a reward for clever or interesting role play. A DC successful 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check convinces him to give everything up for free, however he then informs the Boromars about the plot. If this happens, see episode 3 for details. Finally, he emphasizes that this information is time sensitive and they must act quickly, there are no guarantees it will be there after the gala.

### TIMBAL'S INFORMATION

If the party successfully obtained the information from Timbal, they know the following:

- A rough layout of the villa, **Player Handout 1**.
- There are twelve armed guards: Five halfling **guards**, two halfling **scouts** mounted on **clawfoot raptors**, and five halfling **tribal warriors** in full Talenta battle gear.
- The head of security is a halfling **veteran** named Gerry Splinter.
- The gala is a celebration of Talenta culture. There are probably forty guests, mostly wealthy businessfolk and members of the city administration. Counselor Ilyra Boromar is the host, this is her home.
- The letter is \*probably\* kept in a safe down in the basement accessible by a secret door or in Counselor Boromar's private office. Locations are marked on the map.
- The safe is warded you'll need a good key or a thief to open it.

### DEVELOPMENTS

After meeting with Timbal the party should have a general idea where the letter is and that it's well guarded. Make note if the party used intimidation tactics on Timbal, since it becomes relevant in episode 3. Also, if the party opted to go right to infiltrating the villa, skip scene B and move to episode 3.

## SCENE B. THE PLAN

If the party opted to steal the letter during the gala they have time to take a long rest and each character may take one preparation action. Details are listed below.

### PLAYING THE PILLARS (SCENE A)

#### Combat

If the group really enjoys mixing it up, feel free to throw in a bar fight during the meeting with Timbal Grasstooth or an attempted mugging afterwards. Perhaps some Boromar associates (two or three thugs) overhear the party talking about the job or simply don't like them. Boromars particularly dislike orcs, hobgoblins, and bugbears.

#### Exploration

The party may decide to infiltrate the villa right away, before the ball commences. If that's the case, the preparations are underway, so workers and staff are moving throughout the villa and security are present, though the VIPs are not.

#### Social

If your group particularly enjoys social interaction, the bartender at the Zephyr, an overly-friendly halfling named Mungus, interjects at odd times while the party talks and tries to push games of chance and awkward dares for money.

## AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The villa, Far Hearth, is a two-story, solidly built building with rustic touches of the Talenta Plains: hardwood columns carved to resemble dinosaur bones and native plant life tidily landscaped to form a natural barrier to entry. A pair of halfling **scouts** mounted on **clawfoot raptors** patrols the grounds.

**Lighting.** At night, a 20-foot radius around the villa is brightly illuminated as is the villa's interior. The hedge wall is lit by *everbright lamps* at 40-foot intervals.

### EVERBRIGHT LANTERNS AND YOU

*Everbright lanterns*, common in the magic-rich world of Eberron, shed bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for another 20 feet.

## OBJECTIVE

Formulate a plan of action and execute it.

- Don't get caught, get the letter, don't die.

## PREPARING FOR THE JOB

Here are example ways the party can prepare, provided they have the right equipment. Remember, each character only gets one action:

- **Forging a Document.** Spend 10 gp, make a Dexterity (Deception) check, this is the Wisdom (Insight) DC to detect the forged documents. Examples include but are not limited to a shipping manifest, professional credentials, or identification.
- **Buying Equipment.** Anything listed in chapter 5 of the Player's Handbook.
- **Create a Disguise.** Spend 10 gp, make a Charisma (Deception) check, this is the Wisdom (Insight) DC to beat the disguise.
- **Gather Information.** See "Gathering Information."
- **Scout the Area.** See "Scouting the Area."
- **Other actions as you see fit.** If it makes sense and moves the story forward, go for it.

## GATHERING INFORMATION

A character taking this action makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) or Charisma (Persuasion) check to learn one of the following:

### 1d6 Information

- 1 The kitchen hired a bunch of temporary servers for the event and it's being catered by halfling restaurant called Feast of the Plains run by a guy named Big Mondo.
- 2 The event is private, invitation required
- 3 There's a sewer access that can get you in to the villa from a privy.
- 4 City Watch who patrol near the villa are on the take from the Boromars.
- 5 A firework show run by LeRoy's Spark n' Blast is planned for the late evening.
- 6 There is a bunch of rare art and curios in a viewing room upstairs.

Feast of the Plains and LeRoy's Spark n' Blast are both front outfits for the Boromar Clan and both are in Middle Menthis Plateau.

## SCOUTING THE AREA

Anyone deciding to case the area must make a Wisdom (Perception) check, the result determines how much information they receive:


- **DC 8:** The front doors are open with one guard, the servant's entrance around back is locked with one guard and a guard dog. Tables, awnings, and chairs are set up in the front lawn with a central bonfire and many milling guests in fancy clothes. Visitors without a ticket or authorization are turned away.
- **DC 10:** Five warriors in tribal gear roam outside and occasionally do weapons demonstrations for guests. Neatly arranged boxes of fireworks sit under an awning out back. One guard sits nearby, looking longingly at the boxes.
- **DC 12:** Two guards roam the interior, both floors. They pay little mind to waitstaff. One additional guard monitors the stairs in the front room.
- **DC 14:** Mounted halfling warriors stalk and hide in the landscaping... watching. A burly looking halfling with a lazy eye roams the building unsettling the guests.
- **DC 16:** A pair of urchins pester staff in the back for food and money. The guards seem to know them because they give them a hard time but don't chase them away.

### WHO DOESN'T LOVE URCHINS?

Bertis and Kemper (CN female and male halfling **commoners**) are siblings, age 11 and 9 respectively. They are orphans who beg and steal to survive, not out of malice. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check gains their favor. Any attempts to gain the siblings trust or to convince them to do something made without an offer of money is done at disadvantage. Offering the orphans 1 gp or more grants advantage to checks made to gain their favor. The urchins do not attempt to hurt any staff but would prank partygoers and do other things that kids that age might find fun or exciting.

## DEVELOPMENTS

Once preparations are done and a plan is made, proceed to episode 3. If the party did anything stupid to draw unnecessary attention to themselves the Boromars are on high alert and all Wisdom (Perception) and (Intuition) checks are made by them with advantage.



## EPISODE THREE: THE CAPER

**Estimated Duration:** 1 hour

### SETTING DESCRIPTION

The villa, Far Hearth, is a two-story, solidly built with rustic touches of hardwoods from the Talenta Plains in columns carved to resemble dinosaur bones. Tidily landscaped native plant life to forms a natural barrier to entry and intervals of cover from prying eyes.

**Complications/Events.** Take a moment and familiarize yourself with the rooms. Some rooms have a suggested complication or event to liven up the experience. Feel free to create your own, just be mindful of how many you use if time is a concern.

### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** A terraced hedgerow of bushes and grasses from the Talenta Plains forms a perimeter 50 feet from the villa proper. Prickly scrub bushes and small trees dot the interior providing cover and concealment. The ground is worked stone and packed earth.

**Lighting.** At night a 20-foot radius around the villa is brightly illuminated as is the villa's interior. The hedge wall is lit by *everbright torches* at 40-foot intervals. This gives pockets of dim light along the perimeter and within the compound.

**Activities.** If the party arrives before the gala begins, decorations and equipment are being set as workers bustle about the area. In the evening, dozens of well-dressed folks, a mixture of halfling and human with a smattering of dwarves and half-elves, mill about the torchlit grounds drinking and nibbling on fancy treats. Up-tempo music pours from the villa, a mixture of wind and string instruments producing a light, merry beat.

### OBJECTIVES

In this episode the party must steal the encoded letter located in area C3 and escape capture or death.

### SCENE A: GROUND FLOOR

The villa is designed with halfling proportions in mind, which can be uncomfortable for larger folk. Unless otherwise specified in the description, the lintels for all doorways are 5 feet, 5 inches, and ceilings are 7 feet. Creatures taller than this might experience difficulties when running through the house at your discretion.

### CREATURES AND NPCs.

The villa holds the following NPCs for you to use as you see fit.

- Five halfling **guards**: one in area A2, two roaming the interior of the villa's first and second floors, one outside area A13 with a **mastiff**, and one in A11. All these

guards have signets allowing them to command the automatons in areas A8 and B5 and access the secret doors in A2 and A8.

- Five halfling **tribal warriors**: three are roaming area A1 and two in area A9.
- Two halfling **scouts** mounted on **clawfoot raptors** in area A1.
- One halfling **veteran**, an angry older man named Gerry Splinter, roaming around, running security.
- One halfling **noble**, Counselor Ilyra Boromar, owner of the villa. Ilyra is having drinks and conversing in area B5. She also has a command signet ring for the automatons.
- One automaton (use the **animated armor** statistics) in areas A8 and B5.

**Objectives & Goals.** The guards are polite and well-mannered with guests if the guests reciprocate. The guards tolerate no frippery and take their jobs seriously. Counselor Boromar wants the event to go smoothly. She does not involve herself in any illicit goings on nor does she engage in combat. Gerry Splinter wants to punch someone in the crotch and relishes a chance to mix it up. If things stay quiet, he drinks and makes rude noises at guests. The tribal warriors and scouts are in from the plains, they're having fun but would love a chance to beat someone senseless.

**What do They Know?** The five guards and Gerry Splinter know that some "important letter" was delivered not long ago and is down in the basement safe. Counselor Boromar knows that something important is being held at the villa and wants to ensure that it's passed on tomorrow as planned. The tribal warriors and scouts know something important is in the basement, nothing more. The guards, Gerry, and Counselor Boromar each possess a command signet to activate the automatons in areas A8 and B5 and open the secret doors in areas A2 and A8. Each door has an indent (at halfling height) that fits the face of these signets.

#### EVERYONE IS A HALFLING AT HEART

The halfling **commoners, guards, scouts, veteran, tribal warriors, bandit captain, and noble** in this section use their Monster Manual stat blocks with the following additions:

- **Lucky.** When the NPC rolls a 1 on the d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, the NPC can reroll the die and must use the new roll.
- **Brave.** The NPC has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.
- **Halfling Nimbleness.** The NPC can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than Small.
- **Speed.** The NPC's walking speed is 25 feet.
- **Size.** The NPC's size is Small.

## A1. PORCH & FRONT YARD

The patio and front lawn are brightly lit by torches and a central bonfire around which sit small tables and chairs under awnings. There are dozens of well-dressed partygoers laughing, talking and dancing as waitstaff slide between them offering refreshments.

- There is a gated entry 50 feet south of the house. A single halfling steward (treat as a commoner) checks guests off a list. Those not on the list are politely asked to leave. The steward summons guards if a potential guest is belligerent. The tribal warriors rush to assist if anything unusual happens, followed by the mounted scouts and a pair of guards the following round.
- A pair of **halfling scouts** in full hunting regalia mounted on **clawfoot raptors** patrol the grounds outside.
- Three halfling **tribal warriors** wander among the guests shaking hands, doing weapons demonstrations for the guests, and answering questions.

## A2. FOYER

Dual hardwood doors open to reveal a spacious foyer decorated with a halfling-height viewing mirror and Talenta tribal art. The room opens in to a parlor to the northwest, a pair of doors to the north, a hallway to the northeast, a door to the east, and a short set of stairs leading up to the west.

- One halfling **guard** stands sentry here along with a pair of stewards who take coats and assist guests with finding their way around.
- A spiral staircase leads up to the second floor (see scene B).

- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check in this room reveals that a wall near the base of the staircase is a secret door leading to the basement (scene C). This door is protected by an *alarm* spell that activates unless a Boromar signet ring is used to open it.

## A3. MUSICIAN STAND

This octagonal room has beautiful, stained glass windows opened to the front yard with stairs to the north and the east.

- Five musicians (treat as **commoners**) play traditional halfling instruments. They flee at the first sign of trouble and grab a guard if they see anything out of sorts.
- The music provides background noise such that low talking and spellcasting cannot be discerned.

**Complication.** Frightening or disrupting the band results in the entire compound being locked down and guests ushered away.

## A4. SUN ROOM

Doorways from the north and west open in to reveal a room decorated with small tables decorated with animal specimens under glass, a pair of leather couches, and several chairs. The taxidermized heads of various mammalian beasts adorn the walls alongside leaded crystal windows. The windows and wooden shutters are open to the front yard.

- Several guests mingle here along with a pair of stewards.



- A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Nature) check reveals several of the taxidermy and glassed specimens could be stripped for 50 gp worth of spell components. This would involve two rounds of activity and breaking some glass.

## A5. DINING PARLOR

The center of this room is dominated by a large, wooden dining table crafted to resemble a baobab tree with the canopy serving as the table top. Drinks and an array of roasted meats, vegetables, and other savory items adorn the length of the table.

- A pair of stewards assist guests and summon kitchen staff to refill dishes as they get low.

**Event.** A pair of young, human men (**commoners**) have had a bit too much to drink and start a verbal dustup in the parlor. If not resolved in two rounds three **guards** arrive to deal with the situation. They return to their posts in approximately 5 minutes.

## A6. WATER CLOSET

This is a toilet and washroom.

**Complication.** A couple of guests (**commoners**) are feeling amorous and snuck in here to get some “alone time.” If the door opens, they both scream before burling excuses and running away. This draws the attention of the guard in A2 and the tribal warriors in A1 as well as a crowd of curious onlookers.

## A7. COAT CLOSET

This closet is complete with coats, shoes, umbrellas, and a few lanterns. Attempts made to hide here are done with advantage.

## A8. SECRET LIFT TO BASEMENT

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a secret door along the east wall of the hallway. Inside is an elevator that leads to the basement.

The elevator is manned by a halfling-sized automaton clutching a simple switch (treat as **animated armor** of Small size). Anyone wearing a command signet may command the automaton or operate the elevator themselves. If a creature attempts to operate the elevator without the phrase the automaton attempts to restrain said creature while screeching an alarm audible for 50 feet. If attacked, the automaton fights until destroyed or commanded to stop by one of the security staff.

## A9. BACK PATIO

Three cooking fires with meat roasting on spits dominate this area. A pair of double doors occupy the northeast wall leading to the kitchen.

- Two halfling **tribal warriors** snatch roasted meat from the serving trays and drink cups of mead.
- A dozen guests (**commoners**) chat and play lawn games.
- Smoke from the cooking fires obscures line of sight to the northeast. Dexterity (Stealth) checks made approaching from this direction are made with advantage.
- 45 feet to the north is a 10-foot-square area of neatly stacked fireworks launchers. Inflicting 5 or more points of fire or lightning damage to this area causes a massive, colorful explosion in a 30-foot radius. Anyone in this area must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (3d6) fire damage and be deafened for one round.

**Event.** If the fireworks detonate, guests, Counselor Boromar, and waitstaff run screaming from the villa. Two **guards** remain inside, one in the foyer and one moves to the basement room C2.

## A10. COLD STORAGE

This icy space is filled with haunches of meat, ice blocks, and frost-rimed boxes. Each wall holds 2-foot-square iron plates, each engraved with a glowing blue rune. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies these runes as the source of cold in the room. If the runes are removed or damaged they cease to function.

## A11. KITCHEN

This room is lined with stoves and ovens with a pair of mage-crafted sinks. Racks with cooking utensils, perishables and seasonings round out the room.

- There are six cooks (**commoners**) in here at any given time along with three stewards (**commoners**).
- A hard-looking halfling **bandit captain** named Big Mondo picks over food and chats with the cooks. He is “visiting” until the letter is moved along and deciphered.

**Complication.** Any undisguised character Mondo spots who interacted with him in *Murder in Skyway* is immediately recognized. If spotted, characters did not take his mission or were rude or hostile to Mondo previously, he calls the alarm. Otherwise, he laughs and asks for a bribe of 10 gp and informs the party they owe him. If he died in *Murder in Skyway* disregard anything pertaining to Mondo.



## A12. SERVICE HALL

A halfling-sized fainting couch rests in the southeast corner, paintings depicting life on the Talenta Plains adorn the walls along with portraits of various halflings.

## A13. PANTRY & STAIRS TO SECOND FLOOR

Stairs rise along the east wall of this room dominated by a pantry filled with perishable and nonperishable foodstuffs. A banded oak door is along the south wall.

- There is a 75 percent chance two stewards (**commoners**) are here retrieving items for the cooks.
- One halfling **guard** with a **mastiff** mount is posted outside the door.

**Complication.** The guard opens the pantry door to ask for a snack as a character enters the room.

## SCENE B: TOP FLOOR

This area is off limits to guests without a specific invitation from Counselor Ilyra Boromar. Guards or staff tell a guest once to go back downstairs. Guards physically remove guests from this area who refuse to turn back.

### B1. UPPER FOYER

This space is decorated with artistic woodcarvings of Talenta hunter masks on the walls. A pair of decorative chairs and a sideboard table adorn the area. A leaded glass window is on the south wall, and the room opens to a pair of doors and a hallway to the north.

There is a 50 percent chance that one of the **guards** is here.

### B2. VIEWING ROOM

An overstuffed settee occupies the center of this room with a large window open along the south wall. Curio cabinets dotted with books, carvings, and ceremonial weapons sit along the northern walls.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (History) check reveals that items are Talenta in design and some are quite old. Collectors outside Sharn would pay a tidy sum for them, but no one in town would touch them if their origin were known.

### B3. LINEN CLOSET

Shelves in this closet are stacked with fresh, clean linen. There is enough space for two M-Medium-sized creatures to fit in this room.

### B4. WATER CLOSET

This is a toilet and washroom.

### B5. READING ROOM

Bookshelves line the eastern and western walls in this room along with a pair of comfy chairs with side tables and reading lights. An alcove along the northwest wall holds an alabaster topped table with fresh cut flowers and a silver tray holding a silver knife.

- Treat the silver knife as a dagger with the silvered property



- A mechanical halfling (Small **animated armor**) stands near the north wall. If creatures that do not possess a command signet enter, the automaton asks them to leave, waits one turn, and if no one with a signet commands it, begins warbling an alarm bringing three **guards** and Gerry the **veteran** in two rounds.
- The automaton attacks if commanded by anyone wearing a command signet.

**Complication.** Counselor Boromar (**noble**) is here with a business associate discussing matters. If she notices someone who does not belong here she shouts for help and commands the automaton to attack. She is in possession of a **keycharm** capable of opening the safe in area C6 that she does not relinquish unless magically compelled. If captured, she calmly informs the characters that they have made a grave error and will pay for their transgressions.

## B6. PIANO ROOM

A beautiful piano, sized for a halfling, rests in the eastern alcove of this room. Portraits dot the walls with doors to the northeast, north, and south.

## B7. HEAD STEWARD'S ROOM

This is a tidy office with desk, chair, ledgers, papers, and other administrative documents neatly arraigned throughout.

- The door is locked, and the head steward is off-site. It requires a successful DC 12 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open.
- A *keycharm* which opens the safe in C6 is locked in a trapped desk drawer.

**Trapped Drawer.** The locked drawer is trapped with a poison needle. Opening the chest without the proper key causes the needle to spring out, delivering a dose of poison. When the trap is triggered, the needle extends 3 inches straight out from the lock. A creature within range takes 1 piercing damage and 11 (2d10) poison damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a character to deduce the trap's presence from alterations made to the lock to accommodate the needle. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the trap, removing the needle from the lock. Unsuccessfully attempting to pick the lock triggers the trap.

## B8. SMOKING ROOM

This room has several small, round tables, lounge chairs, ashtrays, and smells strongly of pipe weed. Windows to the north and west are closed with the blinds drawn.

There is a 25 percent chance Gerry (**veteran**) and Big Mondo (**bandit captain**) are here smoking pipes and talking business.

## B9. THE DOLLHOUSE

Shelves filled with dolls of all type and description line the walls of this room, their cold, dead eyes staring eternally in to the void. A lone chair sits vigil in the center of the room.

- A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that some of the creepy dolls have clothing studded with gems and precious metals that equal 50 gp of spell components.
- One doll, resembling a Talenta warrior complete with tangat, activates if touched without uttering "hunt eternal" first. It flips, jumps, and careens through the room until destroyed or the command phrase is uttered. Treat as a **flying sword**. Looting the room activates the doll.

## B10. MASTER BEDROOM

This finely appointed room is Counselor Boromar's bedroom complete with a lovely four poster bed, with matching armoire and dressers. The windows to this room are shut with curtains drawn. A lone door opens to the south.

- The door is locked, requiring a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to open.
- Missing the lock pick DC by 5 or more triggers an audible *alarm* per the alarm spell bringing all available guards in three rounds.

## B11. PRIVATE WASHROOM

This room adjoins the master bedroom and dollhouse to the south. It holds a wash basin, commode, and personal hygiene items.





## B12. PRIVATE OFFICE

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This room opens to the hallway. It holds a sturdy desk, chair, and cot with stacked linens. A cabinet along the wall holds a healer's kit and two *potions of healing*.

## B13 & B14. BEDROOMS & STAIRWAY

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These identical, utilitarian bedrooms consist of a small bed, footlocker, and wooden chair each. Stairs leading to area A13 are at the north end of the room.

## SCENE C: BASEMENT

This area is off limits to all non-Boromar. There are two routes of ingress, the secret elevator in area A8 and the stairway behind a hidden door in area A2. Any unauthorized guests are beaten senseless upon detection.

### C1. DANK HOLE

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This is a dark, damp hole in the floor to do one's business.

### C2. GUARD ROOM

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Stairs leading to area A2 are in northeast corner. The room holds a couple rough tables and chairs along with two pallets of mundane supplies such as rope and construction supplies.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a secret door leading to area C4.

### C3. THE STASH

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This room is mostly empty with a scuffed, dirty floor. A 3-foot-diameter iron disk with latch and keyhole is set in the southern wall.

**Safe.** As it is heavily warded, the safe shines like a beacon to a detect magic. spell reveals the safe radiates an aura of abjuration magic. The easiest way to open the safe and obtain the letter is via one of two *keycharms* (see areas B5 and B7) as they bypass the wards and unlock it.

A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) or DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) reveal the safe is warded with runes of power. Expending a 1st-level or higher spell slot and making a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check suppresses the ward for one round.

A successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools opens the safe. Doing so without the magic suppressed triggers the ward.

The ward can be disarmed with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or smith's tools, either may be used to deface the runes. Failing this check by 5 or more triggers the ward and alerts Counselor Boromar.

When triggered, the ward erupts with magical energy in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the ward. Each creature in the area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 13 (3d8) thunder damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The safe holds the coded letter as well as a stash of cheques, precious stones, and a silver *circlet of blasting*.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a secret door leading to the elevator up to area A2.

### C4. ARMORY

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This room is cold and dry with four sturdy, locked lockers along the north and south walls.

**Lockers.** A successful DC 10 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to picks a locker's lock, and a successful DC 15 Strength check forces a locker open.

Within the north lockers are an assortment of weapons. There are no two-handed weapons, but all other martial and simple weapons are present.

Four suits of leather armor and one suit of studded leather armor, all small sized, are in the south lockers.

### C5. BRIG

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There are six cramped, damp, cells complete with chains and manacles along the east and west walls of this rough-hewn hallway. The area reeks of excrement and fear.

### C6. THE QUIET PLACE

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This damp room holds a tray with a selection of surgical blades and an icepick, a rack, and a chair with no bottom.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a bolt-hole in the western alcove. This is an emergency escape route that connects with a section of Sharn's sewers. It is sized for small creatures, requiring Medium creatures to squeeze.

## TREASURE & REWARDS

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A *circlet of blasting* located in area C3.

## CONCLUSION

If the characters recover the letter, the City Watch and House Orien thank the adventurers and encourage them to keep the note. House Orien does not want to be implicated in a move against the Boromars. The merchant house is just glad to see the letter out of criminal hands. The City Watch wants the characters to keep the note as leverage against retaliation from the criminal family... especially if they find someone to translate it.



## ADVENTURE REWARDS

Upon completing the adventure, the characters each receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. These rewards include advancement and treasure, and may include special rewards, such as story awards or new downtime activities, as follows:

### ADVANCEMENT AND TREASURE CHECKPOINTS

The characters receive 1 advancement checkpoint and 1 treasure checkpoint for each **story objective** that they complete, as follows:

- **Main Objective A:** Crashing a Party
- **Main Objective B:** The Capers

The characters receive 1 advancement checkpoint and 1 treasure checkpoint for each **bonus objective** that they complete, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A: Daask in the Moonlight.** While planning to recover the message, the party learns of a bombing plot orchestrated by the Daask crime syndicate that is set to occur at the ball. If Daask succeeds the message could be destroyed! This bonus objective is in **Appendix 4**.
- **Bonus Objective B: Quid Pro Quo.** The party must flee Middle Menthis with the Boromars hot on their tails. This bonus objective is in **Appendix 5**.

### PLAYER REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

#### MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing adventure's **main objective** unlock this magic item:

**Circlet of Blasting.** Crafted of beaten silver, this circlet holds a brilliant sapphire in its center that emanates a pleasant warmth when used. While wearing this circlet, you can use an action to cast the *scorching ray* spell with it. When you make the spell's attacks, you do so with an attack bonus of +5. The circlet can't be used this way again until the next dawn. This item can be found in **Appendix 6**.

#### STORY AWARDS

During this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award if they are detected and identified during the caper. Loosely speaking, if a Boromar agent/hireling can get a description, the character is identified. Use common sense when dealing with disguises both mundane and magical:

**Anger of the Boromar Clan.** The Boromar Clan knows you stole something very valuable of theirs and they are not pleased. This may have an impact on future adventures. This story award can be found in **Appendix 7**.

#### DM REWARDS

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn **advancement and treasure checkpoints** and downtime as though you played the adventure, but none of the adventure's **player rewards**.

However, this adventure may qualify for rewards earned by completing DM Quests. See the ALDMG (*Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*) for more information about DM Quests.

#### LEVEL PROGRESSION IN EMBERS OF THE LAST WAR

Between *Encounters in Sharn* and the *Embers of the Last War* story arc, the Adventurers League Eberron campaign has many play opportunities. If you plan to play regularly and take in the entire *Embers of the Last War* story, strongly encourage the players to use the Slow Progress option where they voluntarily halve the rewards received for playing. If you plan to play only some of the adventures, or not take part in the bonus objectives, the Normal Progression of rewards may be more appropriate. Because the *Embers of the Last War* adventures are produced as a serial, managing character level accordingly to play style is important.

# APPENDIX 1: LOCATIONS & NPCs

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure:

- **Timbal Grasstooth (TIM-buhl Grass-tooth).** A fence affiliated with the Boromar clan, he also works as an informant with the City Watch when it's advantageous for him.

**Personality:** Cocky, mildly annoying, lazy.

**Ideal:** The easier things are, the happier I am

**Bond:** Whatever I need to do to stay safe and comfortable, I'll do that.

**Flaw:** I will gamble like there's no tomorrow.

- **Counselor Ilyra Boromar (EE-lee-ra Bore-OH-mahr).**

A halving woman of middle years with an even, calm demeanor, she is calculating and ruthless. She is accustomed to wielding power and influence for the benefit of her and her family.

**Personality:** Calm, pleasant even when upset, and politically savvy. Calculates the benefit from all decisions.

**Ideal:** Power exists to be used for the betterment of the family

**Bond:** Family first, family always.

**Flaw:** I disregard the safety of functionaries to serve the family's greater good.

- **Gerry Splinter (JEH-ree SPLINT-er).** Battle-scarred veteran of Sharn's streets, Gerry served the Boromars as long as he can remember.

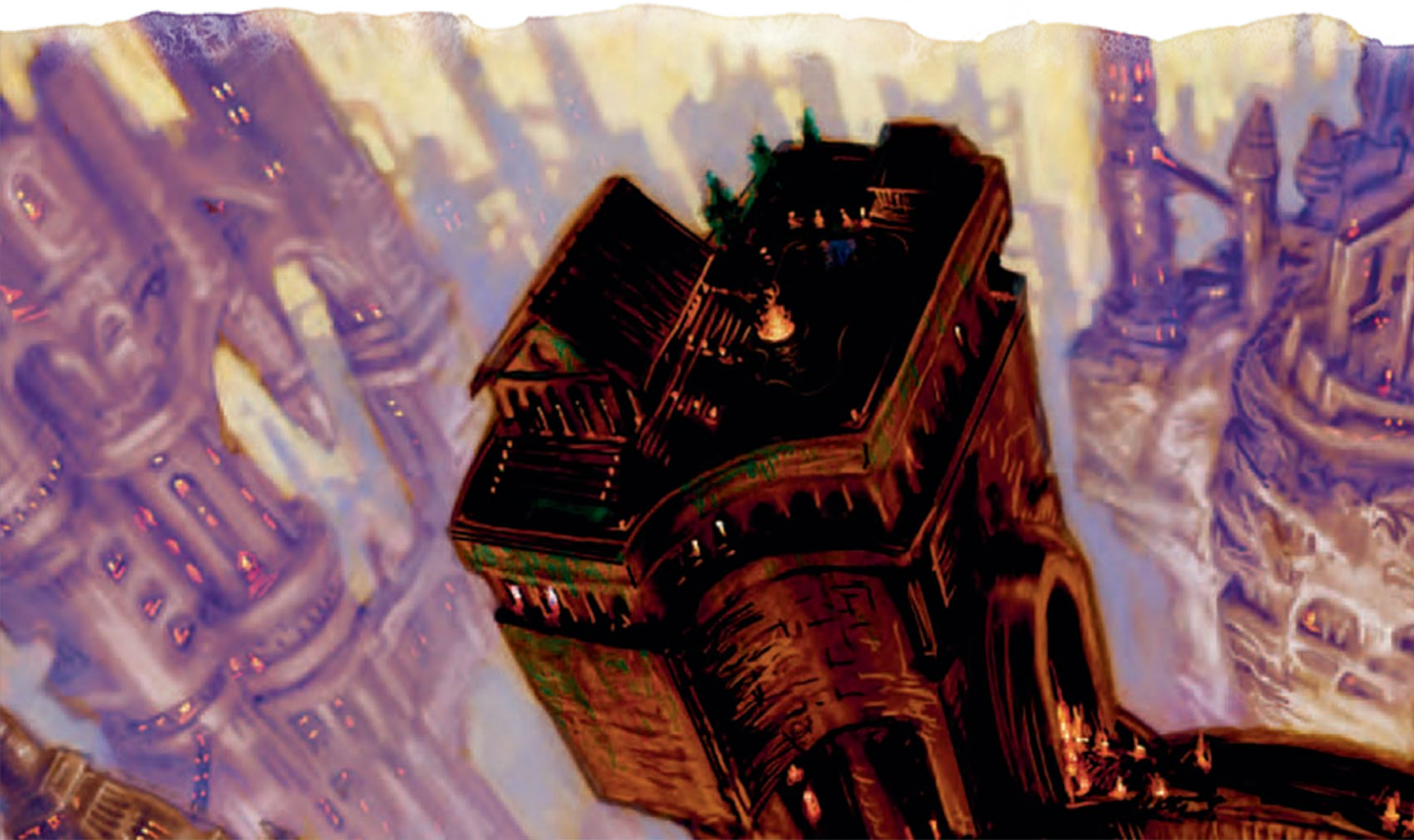
**Personality:** Nonplussed and casually threatening, mumbles what he will do to a foe under his breath whilst fighting.

**Ideal:** When I say jump you say how high.

**Bond:** Boromar is my family, I am loyal unto death.

**Flaw:** I am terrified of cats, can't stand 'em.

- **Far Hearth Villa.** A faux-rustic villa in Little Plains, it is the home of Counselor Ilyra Boromar, city counselor and member of the Boromar clan.



## APPENDIX 2: CREATURE STATISTICS

This appendix details new monsters that do not appear in the *Monster Manual*.

### PISTOLEER

*Medium beast, unaligned*

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**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 16 (3d8+3)

**Speed** 50 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

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**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +5, Stealth +5

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

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**Pounce.** If the clawfoot moves at least 30 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the clawfoot can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

### ACTIONS

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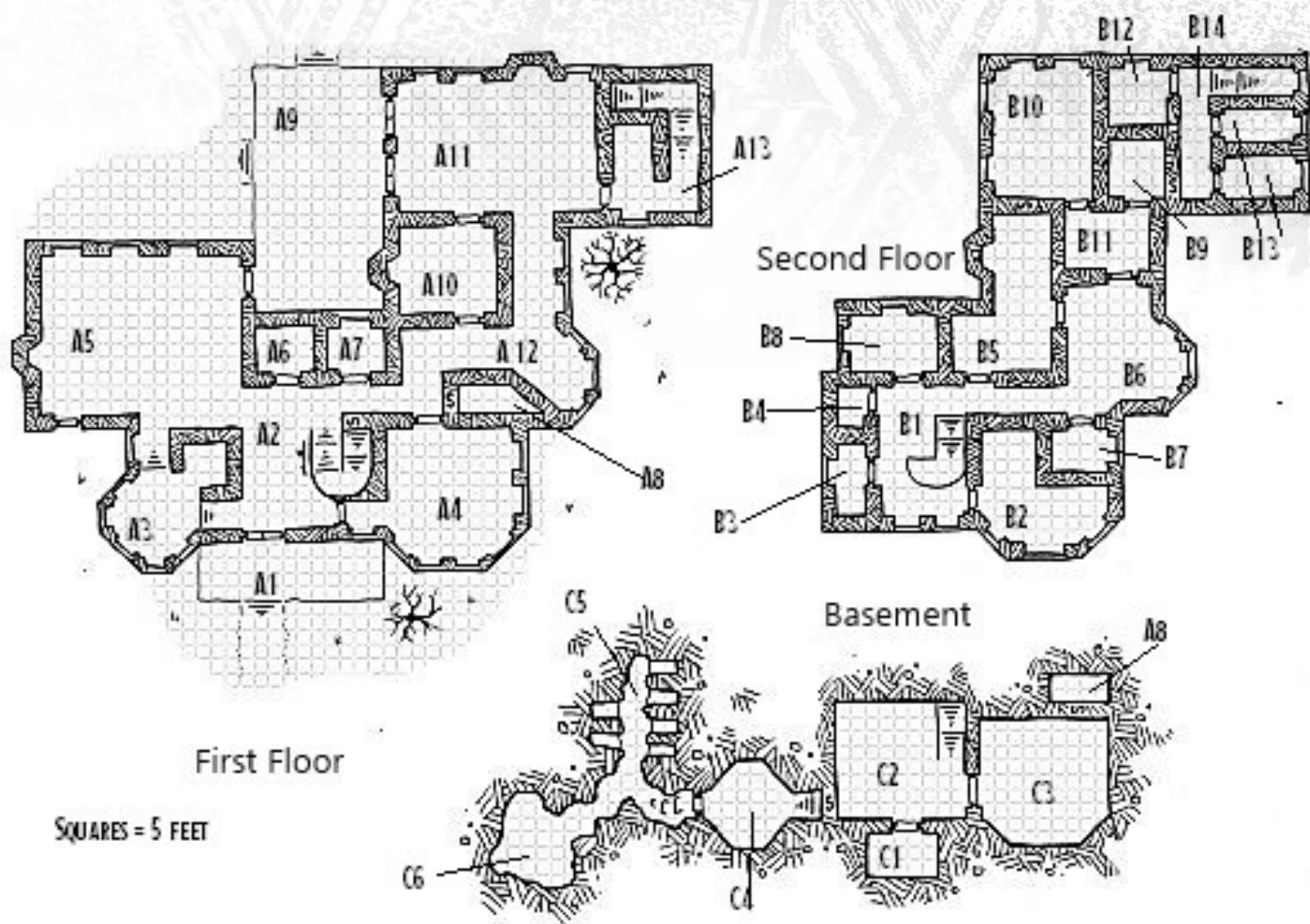
**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 5 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage.

# APPENDIX 3: MAP OF FAR HEARTH VILLA



# APPENDIX 4: DAASK IN THE MOONLIGHT (BONUS OBJECTIVE A.)

**Estimated Duration:** 1 hour

While tracking down the whereabouts of the purloined message, the party stumbles upon a plot by members of the Daask criminal organization holed up in the Cogs to detonate an incendiary device at Far Hearth villa.

## OBJECTIVES

In this episode the party must neutralize the Daask attackers before they incinerate the villa. Optionally, the party can find a way to use the bombing to further their heist. If the letter is destroyed or a character is tied to the bombing, they forfeit the treasure checkpoint.

### MANY WAYS TO REACH THE GOAL

There is no “right” way to approach this objective. A more action-oriented group might want to charge down to the Cogs and kick the doors in, others might want to sneak in and set off the device prematurely, while some might want to involve the law and find a roleplay-based solution. Enterprising groups might even find a way to use this bombing to their advantage.

## THE COGS

The party’s leads take them to the Cogs, a subterranean warren of tunnels, foundries, and industrial manufacture rife with criminal corruption. It is also a stronghold for the Boromar’s chief rivals, Daask.

**Area Information**

This area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The Daask crew is set up in a dirty shipping warehouse, 100 feet long and 50 feet wide with a 20-foot open joist ceiling. The interior is crammed with goods of questionable origin stacked 10 feet high, leaving corridors between towering stacks of boxes and crates.

**Lighting.** The warehouse is dimly lit by lanterns guttering from the rafters.

**Other Features.** The side doors are poorly locked, requiring a successful DC 10 Dexterity check made with thieves’ tools to pick the lock or a successful DC 14 Strength check to break them down. The main doors move along sliding tracks and make a lot of noise when used, they required a DC 10 Strength check to open under duress.

## CREATURES/NPCs

Three **gnoll** mercenaries put the finishing touches on the device while a **doppelganger**, disguised as a halfling porter named Remo, prepares to deliver the device to the villa. While they are alert, they are not necessarily expecting trouble down here.

**Objectives/Goals.** The gnolls are mercenaries, paid by Daask to protect the bomb until the doppelganger can safely deliver it. The gnolls, eager to defend their reputations, fight savagely to protect the device. The doppelganger attempts to bluff its way out of trouble if cornered. If that fails it attempts to escape and report back to its masters.

**Using This Space.** Keep the following features in mind to make this an interesting fight:

- The ceiling is open and crisscrossed with narrow, wooden beams.
- The boxes stacked about can be shoved with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check, dealing 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage to any creature in an adjacent 5-foot space and making that space difficult terrain.
- Dealing 10 or more points of fire or lightning damage to the bomb causes it to detonate, exploding in a 20-foot-radius sphere. Each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (5d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. Exploding the bomb sets the warehouse ablaze, consuming it in 2d8 minutes.
- If the bomb explodes, the doppelganger and gnolls flee. The round after detonation flames and smoke start to fill the building, all creatures inside must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion. All creatures inside the building take 2 (1d4) fire damage each round on initiative count 0 if they remain after the detonation.
- For a different experience, the party could intercept the bomb on a wagon en route to the villa and battle in the streets of the cogs.

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene, according to your group.

- **Very Weak:** The **doppelganger** does not engage in combat.
- **Weak:** Remove one **gnoll**.
- **Strong or Very Strong:** Add a **gnoll**.



# APPENDIX 5: QUID PRO QUO (BONUS OBJECTIVE A.)

The party has managed to escape the villa, now the Boromars are intent on tracking them down. This is meant to be a daring getaway, so play it fast and loose. If the party did not raise a ruckus, this encounter could instead be payback by Daask enforcers for events in Bonus Objective A, whatever makes the most sense.

## OBJECTIVES

In this episode the party must escape and survive.

## RUN!

In this scene, choose a method of escape, complications and threats, and how the chase ultimately resolves. Remember, even if a character fails an ability check, the chase doesn't end, it becomes more interesting... and harder.

## AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features.

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The streets of Middle Menthis Plateau are worked stone, alive with pedestrians, wagons, and air skiffs whistling by. Vendors dot the sides of the road,

**Lighting.** The streets are brightly lit, by the sun during the day or and street lamps at night.

## RUNNING THIS SCENE

There are many ways this scene could play out. Roll initiative or simply move clockwise around the table asking players what they wish to do after you've set the scene. Here are some examples:

**Sprint through the Crowds.** The streets of Middle Menthis are crowded with foot and vehicle traffic, clever characters can attempt to lose their pursuers in it. Have players describe how they'd maneuver the crowd and use it to disrupt their pursuers. When appropriate, call for an ability check.

**Complications.** On the first failed ability check, a character takes 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage from falling/being struck/etc. because of the failure. On the second failed check, a **bandit** catches up to the character and attacks until it is reduced to half hit points or the character is subdued. On the third failed check, the character must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 6 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from a fast-moving carriage. Subsequent failures inflict 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from failing all over the place.

**Resolving the Chase.** After four successful checks, a character loses their pursuers, otherwise they keep trying until knocked unconscious.

**Flying Away!** If the party commandeers an air skiff, a sort of flying boat made of *soarwood* capable of navigating between the towers, piloted by a frightened teenager (**commoner**). The party could attempt to take the skiff by force, connive the teenager to have the pilot stop, or something else entirely if it makes sense. Use DC 10 or 12 for most checks, higher if the idea is especially farfetched.

**Complications.** The Boromars have an air skiff too! Three **bandits** and a **bandit captain** are in hot pursuit, attempting to knock the party from the sky. One bandit does not attack, but pilots the skiff.

Add to the drama by having each pilot make a DC 12 Dexterity check to avoid crashing in to a footbridge. Failure means each passenger must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or be thrown to the road 20 feet below and continue the escape on foot using the rules above.

**Resolving the Chase.** Each skiff is 20 feet long and 10 feet wide with AC 14, 75 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. One character must pilot the craft as their move action each turn. If no one pilots the craft, it veers in a random direction of your choice. The chase ends when one ship is destroyed, or its crew is killed or knocked unconscious.

## EXAMPLE CHASE COMPLICATIONS

### 1d4 Information

- 1 Look out! Make a DC 15 Dexterity check with any vehicle or crash doing 3d6 bludgeoning damage to all passengers. If you fail by 5 or more, your vehicle is too damaged to rejoin the chase and passengers must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall overboard.
- 2 Shortcut! You may attempt a DC 15 Dexterity check with a vehicle to thread a dangerous passage. If you succeed, move an extra 30 feet this round. If you fail by less than 5 nothing happens. If you fail by 5 or more, you collide and suffer the effects of complication 1.
- 3 A helpful **mage** casts web hoping to slow everyone down for the Sharn Watch. Make a DC 10 Dexterity check with a vehicle or crash into the web. If you do, it takes one round to cut your vehicle free.
- 4 A ratty little urchin throws a rock at a random passenger. That passenger must succeed a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall overboard.

*Encounters in Sharn* offers additional complications if you'd like to flesh this out even more.

# APPENDIX 6: FAR HEARTH MAP (PLAYER HANDOUT)



First Floor



Second Floor

Basement Entrance?

- ✗ *Second floor Desk trapped!*
- ✗ *First floor Secret door here-ish, def. trapped.*



## APPENDIX 7: MAGIC ITEM

Characters completing this adventure's objective unlock this magic item.

### CIRCLET OF BLASTING

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*Wondrous Item, Uncommon*

*Tier 1, 4 treasure checkpoints*

Crafted of beaten silver, this circlet holds a brilliant sapphire in its center that emanates a pleasant warmth when used. While wearing this circlet, you can use an action to cast the *scorching ray* spell with it. When you make the spell's attacks, you do so with an attack bonus of +5. The circlet can't be used this way again until the next dawn.



## APPENDIX 8: STORY AWARD

Characters completing this adventure's objective unlock this story award.

### ANGER OF THE BOROMAR CLAN

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The Boromar Clan knows you stole something very valuable of theirs and they are not pleased. This may have an impact on future adventures.

# APPENDIX 9: DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st-4th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 2**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

## NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/playevents/organized-play>

## NEW TO THE ANNUAL STORYLINE?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/articles/news/eberron-adventurers-league-embers-last-war-storyline>

## NEW TO BEING THE DUNGEON MASTER?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/articles/features/public-dungeon-master>

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character whose level is within the adventure's level range. Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can't return** to the first one if they're outside its level range.

## PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure's appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure—such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character's adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer). The players fill out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for advancement and treasure checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These values are updated at the end of the session.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the D&D Adventurers League Players Guide for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it's the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters' spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

## ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

When combat is a possibility, the adventure will provide a sidebar that helps you to determine the best mix/number of opponents to provide them with to create an appropriate challenge. While you're not bound to these adjustments; they're here for your convenience and consideration.

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's average party level (APL). To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

### DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than		Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent		Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than		Average
5 characters, APL less than		Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent		Average
5 characters, APL greater than		Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than		Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent		Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than		Very strong



## D&D Classics

A look back at vehicles of the clanking, rattling, and infernal kind. And the Single Class Ninja!

---

Everyone loves a sweet ride, especially **doof warriors**. This issue's examination of vehicular content in the DMs Guild has inspired us to look back through past issues of *Dragon*.

Naturally, there are plenty of articles on mounts (Roger E. Moore wrote of flying mounts back in *Dragon* #50) including intelligent mounts, barbaric mounts, and dragon mounts; and when it came to ships, we covered these as recently as *Dragon+* Issue 23.

But we're talking infernal war machines—and that sees us looking back at material that's a bit more mechanical.

---

## Here Comes the Cavalry!



by Matt Bandy

Some gamers (myself included) are attracted to the idea of combining role-playing with wargaming. For the most part, however, we are given only tantalizing bits of such a combination that leave us hungry for more. "The Battle of Volturnus" in STAR FRONTIERS® module 522 is a good example. The module is great fun, but it ends too quickly. There's Alex Curylo's article "Tanks a Lot" which appeared in DRAGON® issue #199 which deals with modifying civilian vehicles for combat. But would there not exist vehicles designed solely for combat purposes? This article presents just such vehicles, based on Alex's article noted above.

**Cavalry**

Four basic divisions exist in any well-balanced military organization: infantry,

cavalry, artillery, and command. This article deals with cavalry — that branch of an army organized and equipped for missions requiring great mobility. Statistics for particularly important cavalry vehicles are listed in Table 1. Airborne vehicles are also considered cavalry. Particularly important airborne vehicles are shown on Table 2.

**Bumping maneuvers**

The vehicles dealt with in this article may take any action, such as bumping and slipping, that normal vehicles can. The battleswagon is an exception to this rule, as its actions may be limited by its size. Some

examples of bumping seem pretty unlikely, such as a hovercraft running an explorer off the road. To correct this situation and to integrate cavalry vehicles into the game, each vehicle has been assigned a "bump number." These numbers are listed in Table 4.

When a bumping situation occurs, the referee finds the difference between the two vehicles' Bump Numbers and multiplies that number by five. The result is added to the modified maximum speed score of the driver of the higher-valued vehicle, then subtracted from that of the driver of the lower-valued vehicle. A percentile die roll is made for each driver to resolve the success or failure of the bump. Rolls of 91-95 always indicate failure. Rolls of 96-99 always indicate success. Just as rolls of 96-99 always indicate failure.

For example, a hovercraft is trying to run a ground car off the road. A quick look at Table 4 shows the difference be-

tween the two vehicles' Bump Numbers to be four. The hovercraft driver's score of 63 minus 20 (4 x 5 = 20) is 43, and the ground car driver's score of 81 plus 20 (for being the driver of the higher-valued vehicle) and minus 30 (for being the vehicle bumped) is 71. The hovercraft driver makes a 1d100 roll of 26, meaning he maintained control of his vehicle. The ground car driver, however, is not so fortunate: a roll of 95 indicates loss of control. The referee now consults the Control Table in the Alpha Dawn expanded rules (page 31) and continues play.

When a driver loses control of his vehicle, standard procedures governing this situation apply. The exceptions to this rule are the tank (ground) and the battleswagon. Due to their low centers of gravity and width, these two vehicles do not roll over. Treat a result of either "roll" or "roll and burn" as a spin.

**Armaments, defenses, and sensors**

Defenses and sensors, instrumental in locating and dealing with the enemy, are shown according to vehicular type on Table 5. Power screens may be of any type covered in the Alpha Dawn rules, the most common being albedo, inertia, and holographic screens. Albedo and inertia screens are detailed in "Tanks a Lot". Holographic screens are described in the following paragraph.

For use in sneak attacks, vehicles are commonly fitted with holo screens equipped with camouflage feedback loops. In certain terrains, however, this tactic is not effective. In passage over sand dunes, vehicles tend to raise a cloud of dust that the holo screen cannot hide, creating suspicion among observers. In these instances, it is best to disguise the vehicle as something more regionally appropriate, such as a thundering herd of camels. Holo screens cannot disguise or hide a vehicle

from radar or infrared sensors. Holo screens use three S&I per Minute.

Armaments are shown according to which turret they occupy in each type of ground vehicle on Table 6. The same is done for airborne vehicles on Table 7. The following section regarding bombs is the only part of this article that deviates from the rules set forth in "Tanks a Lot". That section of Mr. Curylo's article oversimplified the topic.

Bombs do damage of varying severity according to the distance an object is from them when they explode. This is illustrated on Table 8. The chance of a bomb hitting its target is equal to one-half of the bomber's dexterity score, modified. In the event of a miss, use the Grenade Bounce Diagram on page 24 of the Alpha Dawn expanded rules book. The asterisk represents the target and the arrow represents the direction the bomber is traveling. The distance by which the bomb misses its target is dependent upon the altitude of the bomber, as shown on Table 9.

The bomb explodes one turn after being dropped, giving the bomber that amount of time to vacate the blast radius. Failure to vacate the blast area results in damage to the bomber.

Due to the increased sophistication involved in the engineering, manufacture, and application of futuristic vehicles, a great degree of skill will be required to operate these machines. Skill requirements for operating the vehicles dealt with in this article are shown on Table 10.

**Targeting systems**

Numerous targeting systems are in use throughout the Frontier Sector. The most common are the eyewagon coordination (EWC), manual, and cyberlink systems. The cyberlink system is explained in "Tanks a Lot". The remaining two are described in the paragraphs that follow.

"Eyewagon coordination" means that the gamer's eyes and weapons are linked in such a way that they move in tandem. This is accomplished through the use of a special helmet fitted with a low-power laser. The laser follows the movements of the wearer's eyes and, through a complex circuitry link, brings the weapons to bear along the wearer's line of sight. When the weapons are aimed at the target, the gamer has only to push a button, flip a switch, or pull a trigger to fire any combination of weapons. The helmet can be switched from infrared to normal vision and can be turned on or off. The gamer need not expose himself to enemy fire, for each helmet is also linked to a set of infrared video cameras. The images these cameras receive are projected onto the inside of the helmet visor.

On all the vehicles detailed in this article, the weapons are controlled by EWC. The vehicles have one gunner operating each turret who may fire any combination of the weapons mounted on the turret in any one direction on a given turn. Of course,

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In *Dragon* #120 (April 1987) Matt Bandy examined conventional warfare as set within the *Star Frontiers* game. While the game mechanics may not be readily convertible, its real-world references make for compelling reading: "Four basic divisions exist in any well-balanced military organization: infantry, cavalry, artillery, and command. This article deals with cavalry—that branch of an army organized and equipped for missions requiring great mobility."

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## Life Inside

In *Dragon* #172 (August 1991) Thomas M. Kane took a similar approach, only this time for *Top Secret/S.I.* Specifically looking at tanks, his examination of their development and operation might easily apply to life within a war machine. In both cases we imagine they are "hot, cramped, noisy, and often broken down."

Armored fighting vehicles on the roll in the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game

# SHINING ARMOR

by Thomas M. Kane

When you're surrounded by 50 tons of steel and shooting bullets the size of your arm, you're unstoppable, right?

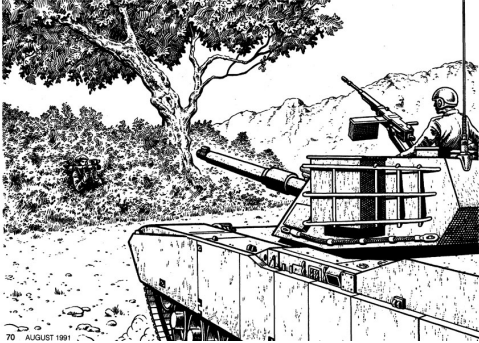
These are guidelines and rules for using tanks in a TOP SECRET/S.I.™ Commando campaign. Commandos do not use tanks often, but never take anything for granted in the covert line of work. If your game agent or commando finds himself supporting a guerrilla movement, the movement might give him an armored fighting vehicle (tanks call them AFVs). Most insurgents keep a few tanks, whether they're any real use or not. Guerrilla figure at least the tanks will look mean in a victory parade if they win. In the meantime, they let the foreign advisors (i.e., your characters) drive them. On other missions, agents might use an armored personnel carrier

(APC) for insertion. An enemy tank might make the perfect getaway car, too. The Administrator may also want to know what the commandos meet if they stumble across an enemy armored force. Put the following information in your portfolio, just in case.

### Tank tactics

Driving a tank would be easy except for two things. Tank drivers can neither see nor hear anything outside the tank. With the hatches closed, an AFV crew sees the world through metal slits, while head-splitting noise shakes the tank from all sides. Anyone outside can walk up and write his initials on the tank's turret. Therefore, smart tankers seldom close their hatches. They keep their heads out

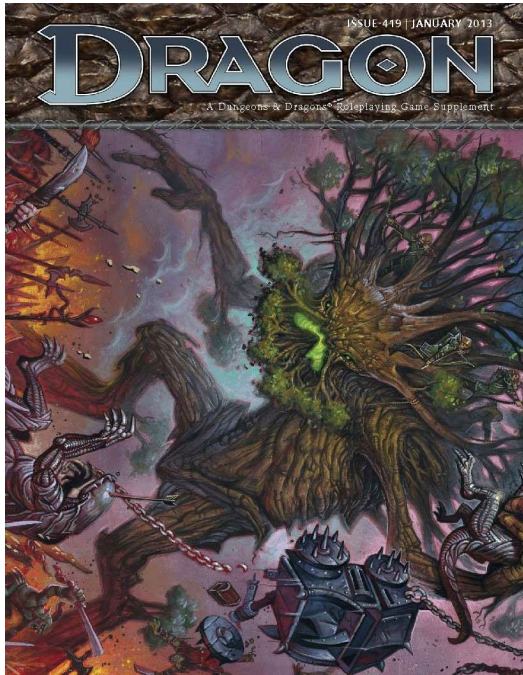
until the bullets come too close. For game purposes, the crew of a buttoned-up hatchbox closed AFV cannot see anything within 30° of the tank. Beyond that, the driver can observe objects a maximum of 45° to his left and right. The gunner may only see things within 30° to the left and right. If the tank crew attempts an INT check to hear something, it suffers a -10 penalty if the engine is running and a -3 penalty if it is not. Characters have normal vision when extending their heads through the hatches, but they still suffer a -5 penalty on hearing INT checks if the engine is running. When tanks stumble into a trap, though, they usually have help. Armored vehicles never travel alone. They operate in platoons of three to five vehicles and almost



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## Efficiency Drive



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Trucking ahead to *Dragon* #419 (January 2013), Claudio Pozas crafted living siege engines—including the clockwork rookery, infernal embassy, and the war willow treant illustrated by Chris Seaman for the issue's cover. "War has been a constant throughout the history of the world. It is little wonder that some mortals, no doubt inspired by the dark whispers of Bane himself, seek more efficient ways to wage the bloody business of warfare."

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## d20 Future Tech

While not from *Dragon* Magazine,



a great deal of material on vehicles can also be gleaned from such sourcebooks as the *d20 Modern* supplements. *d20 Future Tech*—designed by Rodney Thompson and J.D. Wiker and released in 2006—includes options for building, operating, and customizing mechs based off the rules found in 2004’s *d20 Future*.

However, we’re opting to showcase this follow-up in no small part because of the options for metabots (on page 70). We

sincerely hope someone in the community attempts the same by combining infernal war machines into a colossal transforming ’bot!

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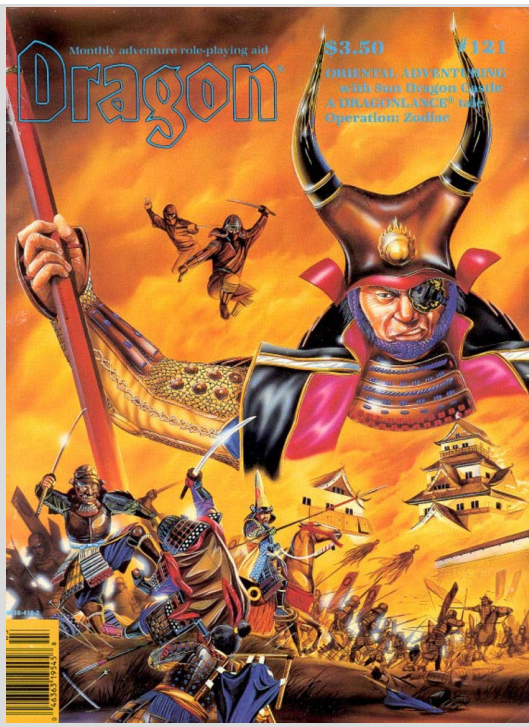
You can find the full *d20 Future Tech* PDF on the DMs Guild, which presents guidelines for developing futuristic societies, generating nonstandard heroes (such as robots), and conducting combat using the kinds of weapons and vehicles available in high-technology settings.

[MORE INFO](#)

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## GUEST EDITOR’S PICK

Coming hot on the heels of *Oriental Adventures* for AD&D, *Dragon* #121 offered the ability to play the Genin, or Single Class Ninja. For a bunch of kids caught up in



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paper copy started to disintegrate, we carried its remnants in our backpacks to school and game sessions. And the samurai on the cover is someone that no sane person would challenge to combat.

*-Chris Boyce*

[Download the Genin PDF](#)

'80s ninja movies such as *The Octagon*, *Ninja III: The Domination*, and *Pray for Death*, this issue of *Dragon* was a dream come true. Although our group's campaigns typically followed the classic style of D&D, this was an exciting change of pace we spent hundreds of hours exploring. Even as the

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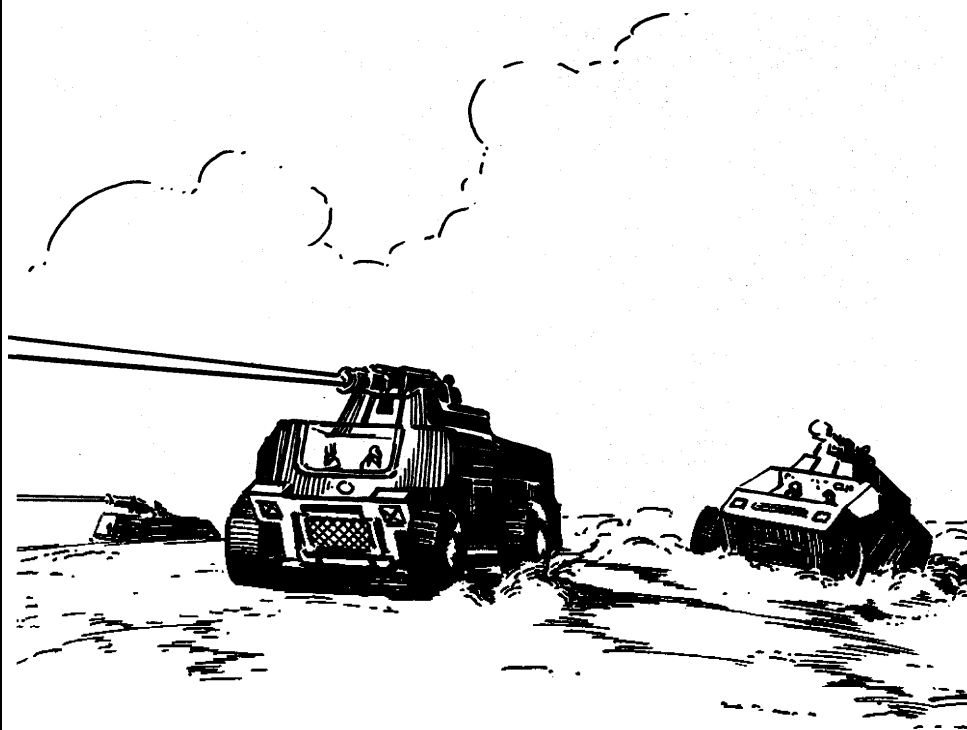


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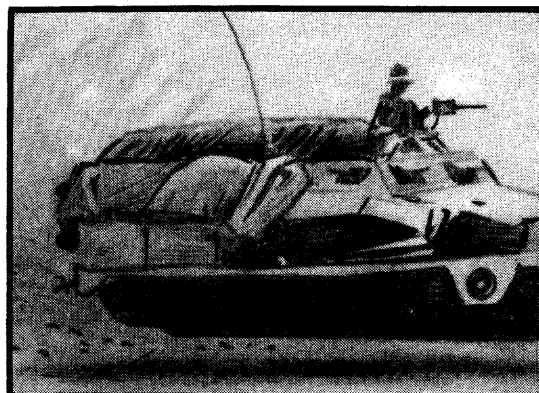
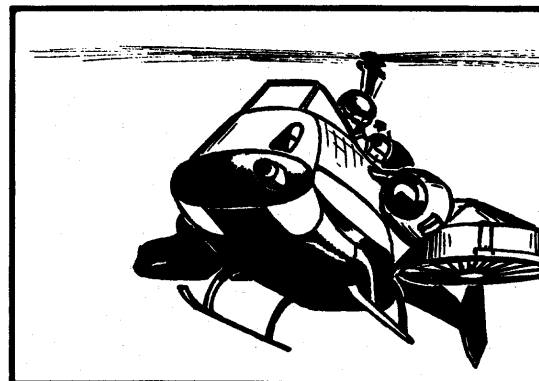
medley



# Here Comes the Cavalry!



*Conventional warfare in the  
STAR FRONTIERS® game*



**by Matt Bandy**

Some gamers (myself included) are attracted to the idea of combining role-playing with wargaming. For the most part, however, we are given only tantalizing bits of such a combination that leave us hungry for more. "The Battle of Voltarnus" in STAR FRONTIERS® module SF2 is a good example. The module is great fun, but it ends too quickly. There's Alex Curylo's article, "Tanks a lot!" which appeared in DRAGON® issue #199 which deals with modifying civilian vehicles for combat. But would there not exist vehicles designed solely for combat purposes? This article presents just such vehicles, based on Alex's article noted above.

## **Cavalry**

Four basic divisions exist in any well-balanced military organization: infantry,

cavalry, artillery, and command. This article deals with cavalry — that branch of an army organized and equipped for missions requiring great mobility. Statistics for particularly important cavalry vehicles are listed in Table 1. Airborne vehicles are also considered cavalry. Particularly important airborne vehicles are shown on Table 2.

The effects that different types of terrain have on cavalry vehicles is important in the calculation of realistic rates of movement. These effects are shown in Table 3. Detailed explanations of terrain types are given in the Alpha Dawn expanded game rules.

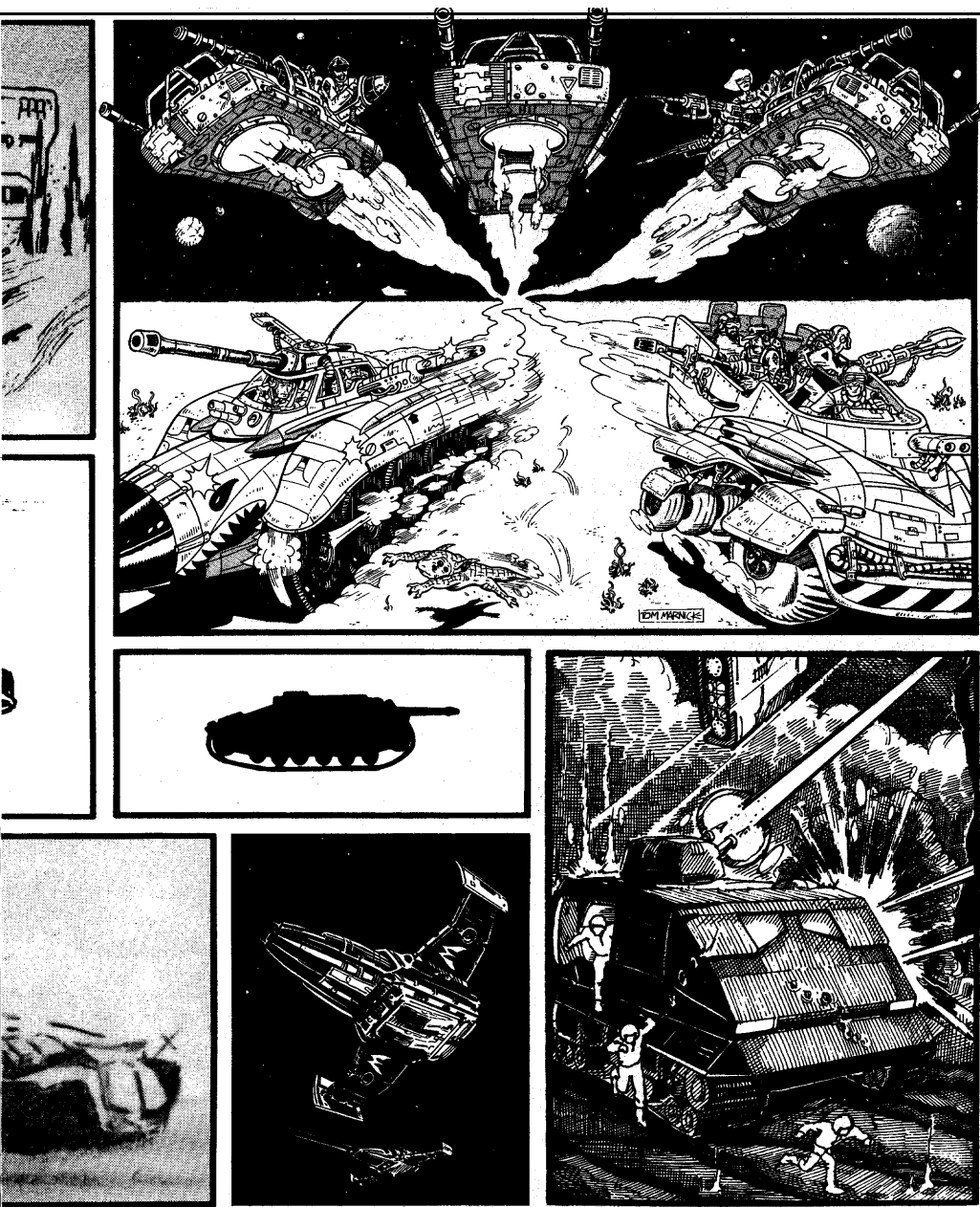
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When a bumping situation occurs, the referee finds the difference between the two vehicles' Bump Numbers and multiplies that number by five. The result is added to the modified reaction speed score of the driver of the higher-valued vehicle, then subtracted from that of the driver of the lower-valued vehicle. A percentile-die roll is made for each driver to resolve the success or failure of the bump. Rolls of 01-05 always indicate success, just as rolls of 96-00 always indicate failure.

For example, a hovercycle is trying to run a ground car off the road. A quick look at Table 4 shows the difference be-



tween the two vehicles' Bump Numbers to be four. The hovercycle driver's score of 63 minus 20 ( $4 \times 5 = 20$ ) is 43, and the ground car driver's score of 81 plus 20 (for being the driver of the higher-valued vehicle) and minus 30 (for being the vehicle bumped) is 71. The hovercycle driver makes a 1d100 roll of 26, meaning he maintained control of his vehicle. The ground car driver, however, is not so fortunate: a roll of 95 indicates loss of control. The referee now consults the Control Table in the Alpha Dawn expanded rules (page 31) and continues play.

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The bomb explodes one turn after being dropped, giving the bomber that amount of time to vacate the blast radius. Failure to vacate the blast area results in damage to the bomber.

Due to the increased sophistication involved in the engineering, Manufacture, and application of futuristic vehicles, a great degree of skill will be required to operate these machines. Skill requirements for operating the vehicles dealt with in this article are shown on Table 10.

### Targeting systems

Numerous targeting systems are in use throughout the Frontier Sector. The most common are the eye-weapon coordination (EWC), manual, and cyberlink systems. The cyberlink system is explained in "Yanks a lot!" The remaining two are described in the paragraphs that follow.

"Eye-weapon coordination" means that the gunner's eyes and weapons are linked in such a way that they move in tandem. This is accomplished through the use of a special helmet fitted with a low-power laser. The laser follows the movements of the wearer's eyes and, through a complex circuitry link, brings the weapons to bear along the wearer's line of sight. When the weapons are aimed at the target, the gunner has only to push a button, flip a switch, or pull a trigger to fire any combination of weapons. The helmet can be switched from infrared to normal vision and can be turned on or off. The gunner need not expose himself to enemy fire, for each helmet is also linked to a set of infrared and video cameras. The images these cameras receive are projected onto the inside of the helmet visor.

On all the vehicles detailed in this article, the weapons are controlled by EWC. The vehicles have one gunner operating each turret who may fire any combination of the weapons mounted on the turret in any one direction on a given turn. Of course,

**Table 1**  
**Land Vehicles**

Vehicle	Top speed	Turn speed	AC/DC	Crew	Parabattery	Mileage
Hover vehicles						
Hovertank	200	70	60/40	3	4	4 SEU/km
APC	230	80	70/60	2 (20)	3	2 SEU/km
Battlewagon	150	50	40/30	5	5*	8 SEU/km
Ground vehicles						
Tank	130	100	70/60	3	4	4 SEU/km
APC	130	100	60/50	2 (20)	3	2 SEU/km

\* A parabattery type 5 costs 8,700 credits, weighs 400 kg, and produces 8,000 SEU.

**Key to Table 1**

AC/DC: Acceleration/Deceleration  
 Crew: Minimum number of crew members required for the vehicle to operate at maximum efficiency. Value in parentheses shows passenger capacity.  
 Speeds: Given in meters per turn.  
 Turn speeds: Because of their low centers of gravity, most vehicles shown here have high turn speeds.  
 Mileage: The mileage properties of the vehicles are given because all the systems of said vehicles (i.e. weapons, defenses, sensors, and targeting systems) as well as the engine draw power from the vehicle's parabattery. A tally of SEU used should be kept by the players or referee.  
 Hovertank: A large, armored vehicle that floats 50 cm above the ground on a cushion of air. It resembles the tanks of today sans treads.  
 APC: Armored Personnel Carrier. Both ground and hover APCs look like large, armored transports and can carry 18 passengers. These passengers can all vacate the APC in two turns via the 10 hatches in the ceiling of the passenger compartment. These hatches may be opened to serve as firing ports.  
 Battlewagon: A huge, armored vehicle wide enough to take up two lanes of a highway, and designed to carry out extremely hazardous missions individually.  
 Tank: A large, armored vehicle much like modern-day tanks in appearance and locomotion.

**Table 2**  
**Airborne Vehicles**

Vehicle	Top speed	Cruise speed	AC/DC	Turns	Crew	Parabattery	Mileage
Attack helicopter	600	100	120/120	8	2	5	8 SEU/km
VTOL fighter-bomber	1500	650	120/120	6	2	5	8 SEU/km

**Key to Table 2**

Turns: The number of 45° turns the vehicle can make in one game turn.  
 Attack helicopter: An armed and armored jetcopter designed to combat enemy ground forces.  
 VTOL fighter-bomber: An armored aircar with exterior weapon mounts that is designed for high-speed bombing runs. However, it is versatile enough to hold its own in a dogfight.

**Table 3**  
**Effects of Terrain**

Vehicle	Clear	Broken	Rugged	Bog	Water	Highway	Hazard
Hover vehicles							
Hovertank	1.0	0.8	-	1.0	0.9	1.2	0.8
APC	1.0	0.7	-	0.9	0.9	1.3	0.8
Battlewagon	1.0	0.8	-	1.0	0.9	1.2	0.8
Ground vehicles							
Tank	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	-	1.1	-
APC	0.9	0.7	0.3	0.6	-	1.2	-
Airborne							
Attack helicopter*	1.0	0.9	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.6
VTOL fighter-bomber*	1.0	0.9	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.4

\* Modifiers apply only if the vehicle is within 100 meters of the surface. Above that altitude, movement is at 1.0.

**Table 4  
Vehicle Bump Numbers**

Vehicle	Bump number
Hovercycle	1
Ground cycle	2
Hovercar	4
Ground car	5
Hover transport	6
Ground transport	7
APC (hover)	9
APC (ground)	10
Hovertank	12
Explorer	13
Tank	14
Battlewagon	16

weapons firing once every two or four turns must respect their limitations. EWC gives the user a +30 modifier to hit. The gunner receives no additional bonuses due to weapons skills.

“Manual” operation means the gunner operates the weapon by hand. This is by far the most common targeting system in civilian use. The gunner using this system must expose himself to enemy fire but will have hard cover if the weapon is mounted on a vehicle. Skill bonuses apply when using this system.

**UPF and Sathar use**

The UPF and Sathar war machines have little use for cavalry vehicles, as they are expensive and easily destroyed by planetary defenses in any attempted landing. Nevertheless, each faction does maintain a small complement of cavalry vehicles aboard assault transports, in case the attackers happen to cripple the enemy’s planetary defenses.

Planetary governments, however, are a different matter entirely. Being fast and durable, cavalry is an important factor in any planetary engagement and constitutes a large part of all planetary governmental armies in the Frontier. For what it’s worth, large Sathar biogenetic constructs are also considered cavalry.

On a final note, EWC systems, all weapons, and all defenses presented in this article are banned from civilian use (except by UPF Grant #739) by the Arms Proliferation Act.

**Table 8  
Bombs**

Distance from bomb	Damage	
	Light	Heavy
0-20 m	25d10	50d10
21-50 m	20d10	40d10
51-100 m	15d10	30d10
101-200 m	10d10	20d10
201-300 m	5d10	10d10
301-400 m	—	5d10
401+ m	—	—

**Table 6  
Defenses, Sensors, and Turrets**

Vehicle	Sensors	Defenses	Turrets
Hover			
Hovertank	IR,V,SL	IRJ,S,A20	2 (L)
APC	IR,V,SL	IRJ,S,A15	1(M)
Battlewagon	IR,V,SL	IRJ,S,A25	3(L)
Ground			
APC	IR,V,SL	IRJ,S,A20	1(M)
Tank	IR,V,SL	IRJ,S,A25	2(L)
Airborne			
Attack helicopter	IR,V,SL,R	IRJ,S,ES,A20	1(M), 4 (Pods)
VTOL fighter-bomber	IR,V,SL,R	IRJ,S,ES,A20	1(M), 4 (Pods)

**Key to Table 5**

IR: Infrared cameras      V: Video cameras      SL: Searchlight  
 R: Radar                    IRJ: Infrared jammer      A: Armor (# of coats)  
 S: Power screen(s)      ES: Ejection seat

**Table 6  
Armaments for Ground Vehicles**

Vehicle	Turret		
	One	Two	Three
Hover			
Hovertank	VMG,VHL	GMx6	-
APC	VMG	-	-
Battlewagon	VMG,VHL	C,FT	GMx6
Ground			
Tank	VMG,VHL,FT	GMx8	-
APC	VMG,FT	-	-

**Key to Table 6**

VMG: Vehicle machine gun    VHL: Vehicle heavy laser    GM: Guided missile (Type 2)  
 C: Cannon                    FT: Flamethrower            B: Bomb (Heavy)

**Table 7  
Armaments for Airborne Vehicles**

Vehicle	Turret	Pod number				Pylons
		One	Two	Three	Four	
Attack helicopter	VHL	GMx4	VMG	GMx4	VMG	Bx2
VTOL fighter-bomber	VHL	GMx2	VMG	GMx2	VMG	Bx6

**Key to Table 7**

VMG: Vehicle machine gun    VHL: Vehicle heavy laser    GM: Guided missile (Type 2)  
 C: Cannon                    FT: Flamethrower            B: Bomb (Heavy)

**Table 9  
Distance of Miss**

Altitude of bomber	Miss distance
Point blank	20m
Short	50m
Medium	150m
Long	250m
Extreme	350m

**Table 10  
Skill Requirements**

Vehicle	Driver skill requirement
APC	Technician 1
Hovertank	Technician 2
Tank	Technician 2
Battlewagon	Technician 4
Attack helicopter	Technician 4
VTOL ftr./bmbr.	Technician 5

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# SHINING ARMOR

by Thomas M. Kane

When you're surrounded by 50 tons of steel and shooting bullets the size of your arm, you're unstoppable, right?

These are guidelines and rules for using tanks in a TOP SECRET/S.I.™ Commando campaign. Commandos do not use tanks often, but never take anything for granted in the covert line of work. If your game agent or commando finds himself supporting a guerilla movement, the movement might give him an armored fighting vehicle (tankers call them AFVs). Most insurgents keep a few tanks, whether they're any real use or not. Guerillas figure at least the tanks will look mean in a victory parade if they win. In the meantime, they let the foreign advisors (i.e., your characters) drive them. On other missions, agents might use an armored personnel carrier

(APC) for insertion. An enemy tank might make the perfect getaway car, too. The Administrator may also want to know what the commandos meet if they stumble across an enemy armored force. Put the following information in your portfolio, just in case.

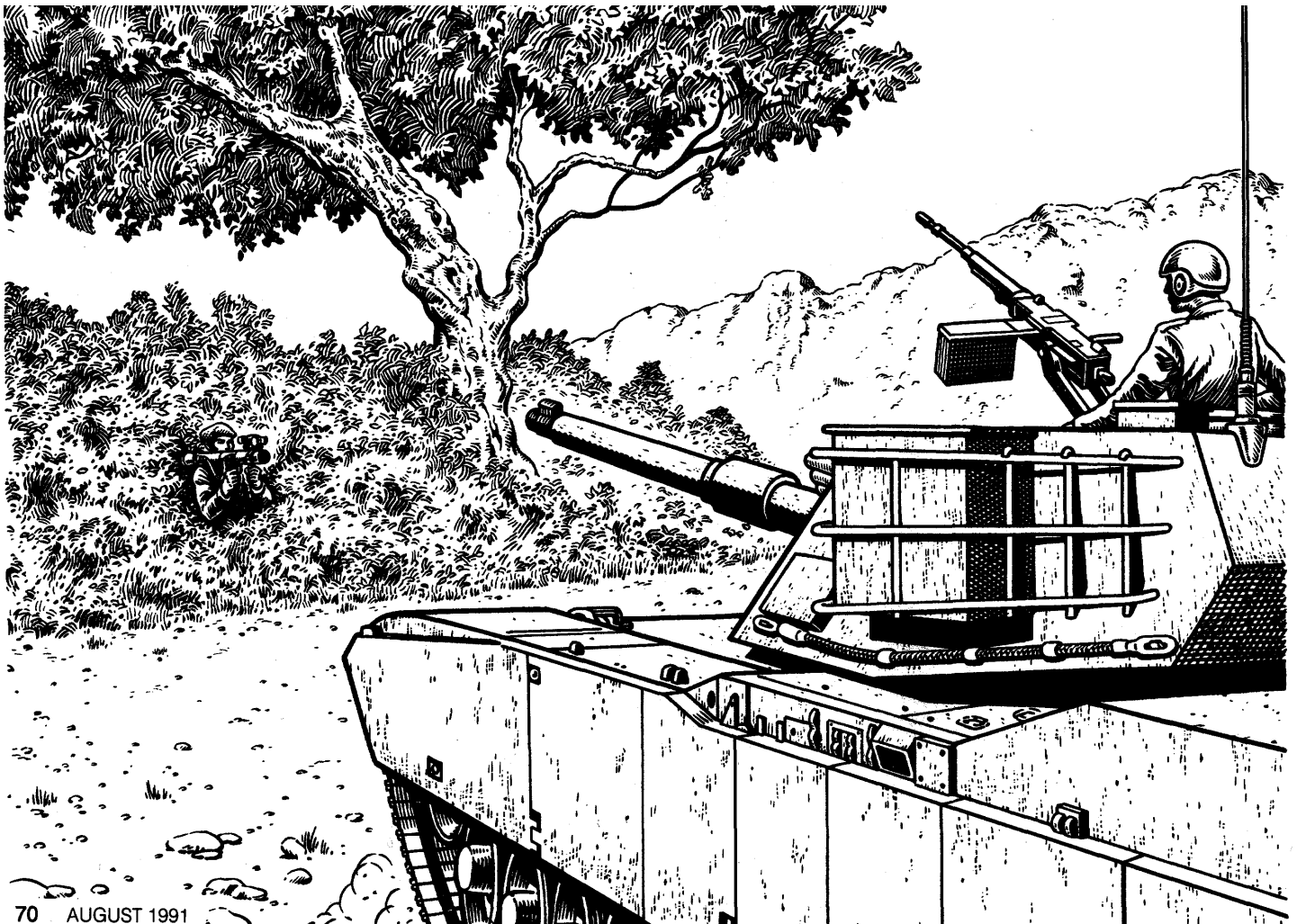
## Tank tactics

Driving a tank would be easy except for two things: Tank drivers can neither see nor hear anything outside the tank. With the hatches closed, an AFV crew sees the world through metal slits, while head-splitting noise shakes the tank from all sides. Anyone outside can waltz up and write his initials on the tank's turret. Therefore, smart tankers seldom close their hatches. They keep their heads out

until the bullets come too close.

For game purposes, the crew of a buttoned-up (hatches closed) AFV cannot see anything within 30' of the tank. Beyond this, the driver can observe objects a maximum of 45° to his left and right. The gunner may only see things within 30° to the left and right. If the tank crew attempts an INT check to hear something, it suffers a -10 penalty if the engine is running and a -3 penalty if it is not. Characters have normal vision when extending their heads through the hatches, but they still suffer a -5 penalty on hearing INT checks if the engine is running.

When tanks stumble into a trap, though, they usually have help. Armored vehicles never travel alone. They operate in platoons of three to five vehicles and almost



always have infantry with them, men who can clear away ambushes. The foot soldiers ride armored personnel carriers which keep them from slowing the armored column too badly.

Tanks can also hide. In defense, they routinely use hills and other obstacles to protect their hulls, leaving only the turrets and guns exposed. Consult page 73 of the TOP SECRET/S.I. *Player's Guide* for the effects of cover. Armored vehicles use a special "reverse slope" tactic to protect themselves on inclines. They go to the side of a ridge that is away from the enemy and lower their guns as far as possible. Then they drive upslope until only the gun and turret protrude over the crest. The hill provides hard cover for the hull, but the tank can shoot into the valley beyond. To determine whether a shot hits an exposed part of its target, consult Table 1. One can use the normal called shots and bumping rules (page 73, *Player's Guide*) in vehicular combat. When moving, armored vehicles dash between "bounds" or covered areas. Ideally, a bound protects the tanks behind it but allows them to fire in support of other tanks. If no suitable cover is available, gunners create it by firing smoke shells (noted later).

Gunners suffer a -40 penalty to their skill checks when firing cannon from moving vehicles. Therefore, tanks move using "overwatch" maneuvers, in which half of a platoon remains still and ready to shoot while the other half advances. The faster form of overwatch, called "leap-frog," works as follows: 1) Group A advances to a firing position behind a bound; 2) Group B drives to group A and passes it, to a new bound; 3) Group A drives to group B and passes it; etc. This leaves the platoon divided at any given moment. Cautious tankers use "caterpillar" movement, in which, at step #2 above, group B joins group A at the bound before either advances to a new position, and so on.

Overwatch maneuvers give the stationary tanks a "watch" bonus of +5 on initiative (pages 62-63, *Player's Guide*). The real advantages of tactics appear through common sense, not numbers. Caterpillar movement does not receive any movement penalty, but the tanks only go half as far in each step. For the same reason, this maneuver makes it harder for enemies to catch the groups separated. If the Administrator keeps track of which tank is where and who can see what, astute tactics work the same way they do for real tanks, by concentrating maximum firepower at minimum risk.

## Gunnery and equipment

Tanks carry many specialized sorts of ammunition. Common sorts include solid shot for carving through armor; high explosive for use against infantry; HEAT, which uses a shaped charge to penetrate tanks; and Hetz, HESH, and other specialized shells to defeat composite armors. For game purposes, assume that there are two

classes of offensive ammunition: high explosive and antitank. High-explosive shells cause more damage in a wider radius to exposed targets but always have an antivehicle (AV) rating of zero. The AV rating of antitank shot, along with explosion types for both kinds of shells, appears on Table 2.

When a vehicle is hit by a cannon round, it must immediately roll on the Crash Table (page 86, *Player's Guide*). A high-explosive hit causes a crash only if the operator fails a driving check. After checking the Crash Table, roll 1d6. On a 1 or 2, the tank loses its largest functional weapon. This can be fixed only at a military garage by a character with the appropriate weapons skill (Tank Gun, Machine Gun, etc.).

Cannon may also fire smoke or illumination rounds. Each smoke shell blankets a circle 50' in diameter. Anyone attempting to fire through the smokescreen suffers a -100 penalty on weapon skill checks. The wind disperses smoke after 1d6 turns, or faster if the Administrator rules that the wind is especially strong. A flare shell drops burning magnesium by parachute, illuminating a 1,000' radius for 3d6x10 seconds.

No tank cannon holds more than one round at a time. Most AFVs carry 50-70 rounds for the main cannon. Standard loading times appear in Table 2. Certain tanks have specialized loaders, described on Table 3.

The Administrator may design vehicles with customized devices. One example would be a flail, a rotating bar in front of the tank that beats the ground with chains. It detonates all mines in the vehicle's path, harmlessly and automatically. See "Watch Your Step!" in DRAGON® issue #148 for more details on land mines. Advanced tanks also carry night-vision equipment, which functions like a triple-range version of the infrared flashlight and goggles described on page 11 of the *Equipment Inventory*

In the near-future setting of the TSAC4 *ER.E.E.Lancers* supplement, vehicles may depend on elaborate electronic equipment and can be hermetically sealed against chemical weapons. In order to steer, these vehicles must depend on video cameras, which make wonderful targets for sharpshooters. A mad scientist's custom-built tank might have hi-tech sensors, geiger counters, computer brains, or force-field generators. If any of this equipment is mounted outside the tank, gunners can disable it with called shots.

## Vehicle notes

The following are special notes and comments on the vehicles described in Table 3. The "Weapons" column shows the bore in millimeters of a vehicle's main cannon. Cannon and ATGMs (antitank guided missiles) are described in Table 2. Page 5 of the *Equipment Inventory* covers HMGs (heavy machine guns) and LMGs (light machine guns). Many tanks also

mount an AAMG (antiaircraft heavy machine gun); it is not mounted for antipersonnel use, although characters might modify it with a successful metalworking check.

**AIFV:** This vehicle is used in the Netherlands, Belgium and the Philippines. Armies often use it to recover damaged tanks from the battlefield.

**AMX-10:** Many models of this APC exist. The French often put a 105 mm gun on the AMX APC, converting it to a light tank with a crew of four. The French export these tanks widely.

**AMX-30:** This widely exported and often-modified tank can reload its main gun in four game turns.

**ASU-85:** The Soviets air-land this light tank hunter to protect paratroopers and other elite forces from enemy armor.

**BMP:** This is a light APC often used by paratroopers or special forces.

**BMP:** The BMP is often adapted for scouting or carrying radar.

**Centurion:** This tank is used throughout the Third World.

**Chieftain:** A gunner can reload this tanks main gun in four game turns.

**Leopard II:** A gunner can reload this tanks main gun in four game turns.

**Merkava:** This inventive Israeli tank has wide rear doors, allowing the crew to load and change its ammunition quickly. Its large interior allows four passengers to ride along with the crew.

**M4 Sherman:** This World War II tank is still used in the Third World.

**M48, M60:** Both are still in the U.S. arsenal and widely used in the Third World.

**PT-76:** This light Soviet tank requires 10 game turns to reload its main cannon.

**Scorpion:** This tank is widely used in the Middle East.

**S-Tank:** This famous "defensive" tank has a low profile that allows it to protect everything but the gun behind cover while still firing. It carries a bulldozer blade to entrench itself. The S-Tank cannot shoot while moving, and its fixed gun can only fire straight forward. However, once it starts shooting, the crew can reload their main cannon in two game turns. Sweden is the only country that uses this tank, but others experiment with it.

**T-34:** The Soviets and Czechs ship this World War II tank to their less reliable Third World allies, including some insurgent groups like the PLO.

**T-series:** The Soviets export all these tanks to the Third World. Only the T-80 is exclusively Russian. The T-55 requires 10 game turns to reload the main cannon. The T-62 requires seven game turns to reload. T-72 and T-80 tanks can be reloaded in four turns, but their automatic loaders break easily. Add five friction points to any mission that involves them (see pages 36-38, TSAC5 *Commando*).

**UDES:** This experimental vehicle is intended to correct the disadvantages of the S-Tank. Current models use a Marder APC chassis. If it is ever produced, the Swedes

will probably develop a new body, more like the S-Tank. A special UDES, the XX-20, uses a jointed hull that can twist itself into new shapes for crossing obstacles or taking cover.

**Tank driving performance:** Armies neither build nor rate AFVs for fancy driving. Assume that all AFVs have the generic acceleration, handling, and braking statistics shown on page 15 of the *Equipment Inventory*.

### Life inside

Tanks are hot, cramped, noisy, and often broken down. In the USSR and France, the army selects the shortest 5% of its recruits for tank crews. People over 5'6" can barely squeeze into their tanks. Tankers regularly suffer slashes, fractures, and amputations from their machinery. Commandos in tanks lose half a psychological-index point per hour (pages 27-28, *Commando*). P.I. losses increase to a full point in Soviet or French tanks. Anyone over 5'6" suffers doubled P.I. penalties in any country's vehicles.

Typical tanks carry four crewmembers. The driver sits in the hull and can put his head out his own personal hatch when he dares. A commander, gunner, and loader squeeze into the turret. If characters try to operate a tank without the loader, it takes twice as long to prepare each shot. Modern Soviet tanks use mechanical feeders and do not need a loader.

U.S. vehicles break down on average every 180 miles. We like to tell ourselves that Soviet tanks malfunction every 150 miles. Commandos accumulate 10 friction points on any mission in which they use tanks and 12 if they use Soviet models. The Israeli Merkava, however, contains large doors for easy servicing and costs only five friction points.

Characters suffer double friction-point costs if they fail to provide normal maintenance for their AFVs. All tanks require eight man-hours of work per day. Tankers

usually make their own repairs, using tool kits in their vehicle or from nearby bases. Generally, if characters have gotten a tank, they can get the tools to fix it. Up to eight people may work on the same vehicle (thereby reducing time to one hour). However, anyone without the basic mechanic skill must pass a default roll of ¼ DEX to contribute useful work.

### Tank destroyers

Main battle tanks are always getting bigger, faster, heavier, and more expensive. A lot of forces would rather not try to keep up. However, they do not want main battle tanks to massacre them. Thus, they use tank destroyers, which are weak tanks designed to ward off bigger ones. Little nations, notably Austria, favor these vehicles since their governments cannot afford armies of super-tanks. Special-operations groups also use tank destroyers, since 80,000-lb. monsters will complicate airdrop insertion. Furthermore, a 90 mm cannon may be small in a tank battle, but it usually satisfies commandos who otherwise get only handguns.

### The "little" APCs

In brushfire operations, "armor" does not need to mean the latest juggernaut fit for World War III. Guerillas and their enemies usually use APCs and reconnaissance cars in place of main battle tanks. Little vehicles often go faster, and, to an insurgent's AK-47, 2" of metal plate might as well be 2'. An armored transport makes a useful base for commandos on long missions, since it has room for supplies, rescued friends, captured enemies, etc. Furthermore, main battle tanks cost fortunes, and the recent ones have secret instrumentation on board. Anyone issuing ordinance for risky work prefers to give out APCs.

Against light opposition, APCs behave like tanks. In an armored battle, they disgorge their passengers and provide cover while the foot soldiers and tanks advance. An APC's infantry must dismount before it can fight. The Soviet Union once instructed foot soldiers to stay in their vehicles and fire through gunnery slits, but this tactic worked so poorly for Syria in the 1973 Middle-East war that all armies abandoned it. Riflemen suffer a -30 penalty on weapons skill checks when firing

through an APC's gun slits, in addition to penalties for firing while moving, etc. (page 74, *Player's Guide*).

An APC's foot soldiers ride as long as they can, usually leaving their vehicles about 600'-900' behind the front. Climbing out of the vehicles is dangerous in enemy fire. APC units try to release their infantry simultaneously, to keep enemy machine-gunners from concentrating on the dismounting squads one at a time. Once on foot, soldiers advance about 300' behind the tanks, and 300' in front of their empty APCs. They communicate with tank commanders using hand signals, loud voices, or, in some cases, telephones on the backs of the vehicles. In defense, infantry stands in front of everything, to stop troops with light antitank weapons (LAWs) from creeping up on their vehicles (see "Hunting Tanks is Fun and Easy!" in DRAGON issue #171 for details on antitank weapons).

Like other armored vehicles, APCs are finicky and uncomfortable. Characters receives five friction points for using an APC. Riders on transports do not need to perform the maintenance associated with tanks. Passengers in armored personnel carriers also pay one P.I. point per day, two in the BMP or BMD, but only one-half point in the M2, M3, M113, AMX-10 and Marder. The comfortable LVTP-7 has no P.I. cost at all.

### Conclusion

Heavy weapons add more to the game than simply being deadlier toys for secret agents. They force characters to think before they fight. With clever tactics, agents can defeat tanks. Since their enemies can do this, too, game balance remains unchanged. Armored vehicle data also makes the TOP SECRET/S.I. world more complete. Special forces must expect to meet heavy weapons. It seems much more plausible for agents to trap a T-34 in some steamy jungle than to chase through New York firing Uzis from red Porsches.

Articles of this sort traditionally include reminders that the TOP SECRET/S.I. game is not a war game. It may not be, but spies—and especially commandos—certainly take an interest in military activity.

**Table 1**  
**Hit Location Against AFVs**

1d10	Location
0	Cannon barrel
1-2	Turret
3-8	Hull
9	Treads

**Table 2**  
**Tank Weapons**

Weapon	AV	Dam/Exp	Range			Load	Weight	Speed
			Min.	Med.	Long			
20-50 mm	+25	1d8/Gre	—	1,500	4,500	3	—	—
51-80 mm	+50	1d8/Mis	—	1,500	3,000	4	—	—
81-110 mm	+70	Gre/Tan	—	2,000	6,000	5	—	—
111+ mm	+90	Gre/Tan	—	3,000	10,000	5	—	—

AV = antivehicle rating; Dam/Exp = damage for antivehicle shot, and type of explosion for high-explosive shot; Gre = grenade-type explosion; Mis = missile type explosion; Tan = tank projectile (see page 80, TOP SECRET/S.I. *Player's Guide*).



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The information in this article is authentic, although standard trench/obstacle/grade data has been extrapolated to cover Soviet tanks where such information is unknown. The following sources were consulted:

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1988. For details on many AFVs, all with color drawings, consult this book.  
 U.S. Army. *The Army Almanac*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950.

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**Table 3**  
**Armored Vehicle Statistics Table**

Vehicle (Nation)	Speed	Prot.	Crew + Pas.	Range	Trench	Obstac.	Grade	Weapons
<b>APCs</b>								
AIFV (NATO)	38/3.9	-8.0	3+7	304	5.3	1.5	60	25 mm, LMG, ATGM
AMX-10 (Fr)	40/4.4	-9.0	3+8	372	8	2.3	60	20 mm, LMG
BMD (USSR)	36/6	-8.0	3+6	199	8	2.6	60	73 mm, LMG, ATGM
BMP (USSR)	49.7/5	-8.0	3+8	310	8	2.6	60	73 mm, LMG, ATGM
BRDM (USSR)	60/6	-7.0	3	466	8	2	60	HMG, LMG
BTR-50 (USSR)	26/6	-7.0	2+14	156	8	2	60	LMG
BTR-60 (USSR)	48/6	-7.0	2+14	300	8	2	60	HMG, LMG
4K (Au)	40	-8.0	2+8	323	6.9	2.6	75	LMG
LAV 25 (Swi)	63/6	-8.0	3+6	485	8	2	70	25 mm, LMG
LVTP 7 (US)	45/8.4	-8.0	3+25	300	7	2	60	HMG
M2/M3 (US)	41/4.5	-1.00	3+6	300	8.3	3	60	25 mm, LMG, ATGM
M113 (US)	42/3.6	-7.0	2+11	300	5.5	2	60	HMG, LMG, ATGM
Marder (Ge)	46.6	-1.00	4+6	323	8	3.3	60	30 mm, LMG
MCV 80 (US)	46.6	-8.0	2+8	310	8.2	2.6	60	30 mm, LMG
MTLB (USSR)	38/3.7	-8.0	2+11	310	7	2.3	60	LMG
<b>Main battle tanks</b>								
AMX-30	39	-1.00	4	295	9	4.1	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
Chieftain (UK)	30	-1.35	4	280	10	3	60	120 mm, HMG, 2xLMG
Centurion (UK)	21	-1.25	4	150	8	3	60	105 mm, 2xHMG, LMG
Leopard I (Ge)	39	-1.25	4	225	9.8	3.7	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
Leopard 2 (Ge)	35	-1.40	4	210	10	3	60	120 mm, 2xLMG
M1 (US)	39	-1.40	4	336	8	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
M4 Sherman (US)	25	-1.00	4	120	7.5	2	60	75 mm, HMG, LMG
M48 A3 (US)	30	-1.00	4	288	8.5	3	60	90 mm, HMG, LMG
M48 A5 (US)	30	-1.25	4	288	8.5	3	60	105 mm, HMG, 1-2xLMG
M60 (US)	29	-1.25	4	280	8.5	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
Merkava (Is)	27	-1.30	4+4	311	10	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
OF-40 (Is)	40	-1.20	4	373	9.8	3.6	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
PT76 (USSR)	26/6	-7.0	4	250	7	3	60	76 mm, 2xLMG
S (Swe)	30/4	-1.25	4	242	7.5	2.9	60	105 mm, 3xLMG, AAMG
T-34 (USSR)	32	-9.0	4	150	8	3	60	85 mm, HMG, LMG
T-55 (USSR)	30	-9.0	4	180	8	3	60	100 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
T-62 (USSR)	36	-1.00	3	288	8	3	60	115 mm, LMG, AAMG
T-72 (USSR)	36	-1.30	3	300	8	3	60	125 mm HMG, LMG, AAMG
T-80 (USSR)	36	-1.35	3	240	8	3	60	125 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
TAM (Ar)	46	-1.20	4	342	8.2	3.2	65	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
Type 61 (Ja)	36	-1.00	4	248	8	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG
Type 69 (Ja)	31	-1.10	4	248	8.8	2.6	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
Type 74 (Ja)	26	-1.10	4	166	8.9	3.3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
UDES (Swe)	46.6	-8.0	3	323	8	3.3	60	120 mm, HMG, 2xLMG, AAMG
Vickers (UK)	31	-1.00	4	373	8	3	60	105 mm, HMG, LMG, AAMG
<b>Tank destroyers</b>								
ASU-85 (USSR)	28	-1.00	5	161	7	3.6	70	85 mm, HMG, AAMG
IK-91 (Swe)	43/6	-1.00	4	342	9.7	2.6	50	90 mm, HMG
Jagdpanzer (Ge)	43	-1.00	4	249	6.6	2.5	60	90 mm, LMG, AAMG
Panzerjager (Au)	40	-1.00	3	323	7.9	2.6	75	105 mm, HMG
<b>Scout vehicles and light tanks</b>								
Ratel (SA)	62.2	-8.0	3+7	620	6	1.5	60	20 mm, LMG
Type 63 (Ch)	25	-8.0	3	150	7	2	60	85 mm, HMG, LMG
Type 73 (Ja)	43.5	-8.0	3+9	186	7	2.3	60	HMG, LMG
Scorpion (UK)	50	-8.0	3	400	6	1.6	60	76 mm, HMG

Speed = Maximum speed (land/amphibious); Prot. = Protection; Crew + Pas. = Passengers (necessary crew + extra passengers); Range = range in miles; Trench = maximum width in feet of trench that can be crossed; Obstac. = Maximum height in feet of obstacle that can be overridden; Grade = maximum grade climbed, in percent.

Nations: Au = Austria; Ar = Argentina; Ch = China; Fr = France; Ge = Germany; Is = Israel; Ja = Japan; NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization; SA = South Africa; Swe = Sweden; Swi = Switzerland; UK = United Kingdom; US = United States; USSR = Soviet Union.

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# DRAGON<sup>®</sup>

A Dungeons & Dragons<sup>®</sup> Roleplaying Game Supplement





# Engines of War

By Claudio Pozas

Illustration by Chris Seaman

From the Dawn War between gods and primordials, through the destructive conflict between Arkhosia and Bael Turath, all the way to the current incursions of the Iron Circle, war has been a constant throughout the history of the world. It is little wonder that some mortals, no doubt inspired by the dark whispers of Bane himself, seek more efficient ways to wage the bloody business of warfare. This article presents living siege engines that many of the D&D world's major races have devised.

## Clockwork Rookery

Clockwork rookeries are masterpieces of engineering and artifice. Though they look similar to regular siege towers at first glance, they are not only more resilient than the nonliving versions, but also self-propelled, easier to maintain, and sentient. In battle, enemies see ephemeral rooks swarming from the tower to harry them, but these celestial illusions are invisible to the tower's allies. The rookery relies on such allies for direction in battle, acting like the lowest-ranking soldier among them. A rookery that has no commander does its best to fulfill what it understands to be its duty or mission.

A clockwork rookery is 35 feet high (Athletics DC 20 to climb). It has three levels, each with a 10-foot-high ceiling, plus a crenelated rooftop set with animate arbalests—much like arbalester

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homunculi—all around. The lower level features a reinforced iron door that its crew can bar from the inside. The middle and upper levels have arrow slits, and a ladder that runs through the middle of the rookery connects all levels. A trapdoor, which can also be barred from either side, allows access to the roof. Creatures inside the tower or on its exterior move with it as if it were a vehicle.

**By Hook or By Crook:** The sturdy construction of a clockwork rookery keeps it from collapsing when rendered inoperative. Once inert, a rookery becomes stationary like any regular tower, but with enough resources and expertise, a salvaged rookery can be made operational again. The difficulty of repairing a damaged rookery makes rulers very protective of these prized siege engines, so it is typical for a squad of soldiers to accompany a clockwork rookery into the field.

**Built for Civilization:** A cadre of artificers and clerics devoted to Erathis, goddess of civilization,

## CLOCKWORK ROOKERIES IN EBERRON

In the EBERRON® setting, House Cannith's skilled artificers create clockwork rookeries—fortifications related to the floating fortress of Argonth. The forces of Breland and Aundair frequently field such towers. Warforged usually make up the crew of a Brelish clockwork rookery.

A variant of the clockwork rookery is the bone belfry, which the forces of Karrnath use. Undead troopers man the Karrnathi belfries, and the *harrier rooks* are shadowy bats. Some belfries fire bolts of necrotic energy rather than arbalest bolts.

<b>Clockwork Rookery</b>		<b>Level 15 Solo Brute</b>
Gargantuan natural animate (construct)		XP 6,000
<b>HP 600; Bloodied 300</b>	<b>AC 27, Fortitude 29, Reflex 25, Will 27</b>	<b>Initiative +7</b>
<b>Speed 6</b>	<b>Immune</b> disease, poison	<b>Perception +12</b>
<b>Saving Throws +5; Action Points 2</b>		All-around vision
TRAITS		
⚙️ <b>Harrier Rooks</b> ♦ <b>Aura 5</b>		
The aura is lightly obscured to enemies.		
<b>All-Around Vision</b>		
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the rookery.		
<b>Juggernaut</b>		
The rookery ignores difficult terrain and provokes no opportunity attacks. It cannot squeeze or grab.		
<b>Instinctive Warfare</b>		
A rookery that starts its turn dominated ignores the condition long enough to use <i>trample</i> as a free action. A rookery that starts its turn stunned ignores the condition long enough to use <i>arbalest volley</i> as a free action.		
<b>Living Vehicle</b>		
Creatures can enter the rookery's space by climbing onto it (DC 20) or moving through any of its entrances (one at the base and one on top). Creatures in the rookery's space move with the rookery as if it were a vehicle.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚡ <b>Arbalest Volley</b> (weapon) ♦ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Close burst 20 (enemies in the burst); +20 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d10 + 7 damage.		
MOVE ACTIONS		
⚡ <b>Trample</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b> (1/round)		
<i>Effect:</i> The rookery moves up to its speed and can move through enemies' spaces during the move. Each time the rookery enters an enemy's space for the first time during the move, it makes the following attack against that enemy. Enemies already in the rookery's space when it uses this power cannot be targets of the power.		
Attack: Melee 0 (enemy in the space); +18 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d12 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.		
Miss: The rookery slides the target up to 4 squares to a square adjacent to the rookery.		
<b>Str 25 (+14)</b>	<b>Dex 10 (+7)</b>	<b>Wis 20 (+12)</b>
<b>Con 22 (+13)</b>	<b>Int 4 (+4)</b>	<b>Cha 5 (+4)</b>
<b>Alignment</b> unaligned <b>Languages</b> understands Common		

created the first clockwork rookeries to expand the civilized domains in the aftermath of Nerath's fall. A clockwork rookery has only the faintest trace of sentience, so it needs a crew to direct and maintain it. In addition to its magical mechanisms and the supplies its crew requires, a rookery usually carries ladders, planks, ropes, and grappling hooks for use in a siege.

**Roving Sentry Towers:** As design of the rookeries progressed, their primary use shifted from siege toward securing dangerous borders. In particular, a lord who can afford a clockwork rookery may send it to reinforce a garrison until a permanent fortification can be built. As an added benefit, the spiritual rooks of a clockwork rookery can carry messages as a homing bird might.

## Infernal Embassy

Few war machines inspired greater fear in the hearts of the dragonborn of old than an infernal embassy. These enormous, flying tetrahedrons bear the fiery mark of Asmodeus upon their faces, heralding not only physical destruction, but also corruption of the soul.

**Portals to the Nine Hells:** An infernal embassy isn't exactly a building. A more accurate description would be that it is a living portal containing a rip in reality that leads straight into the Nine Hells. Once summoned, the embassy relies on conflict to bring forth more devil legionnaires, increasing the hold of the Nine Hells upon the world as long as enemy forces exist to fight. The embassy is a one-way portal, so devils brought to the Material Plane are stranded here. Having nothing to lose, they fight as zealots.

When an infernal embassy is destroyed, it collapses in upon itself, leaving no trace behind aside from a lingering evil that can taint the immediate area for generations.

**Legacy of Bael Turath:** Only an extremely difficult and bloody ritual known to a select few of Bael Turath's leaders can bring one of these edifices to the

natural world. Rumor holds that the Grandmaster of the Iron Circle is scouring the former holdings of Bael Turath in search of this ritual. If the secret of the infernal embassies falls into the hands of the Iron Circle's forces, they might become unstoppable.

<b>Infernal Embassy</b>	<b>Level 22 Solo Artillery</b>	
Huge immortal animate (construct)	XP 20,750	
<b>HP 840; Bloodied 420</b>	<b>Initiative +18</b>	
<b>AC 36, Fortitude 34, Reflex 33, Will 33</b>	<b>Perception +18</b>	
<b>Speed 4, fly 4</b>	All-around vision, blindsight 10	
<b>Immune</b> disease, dominated, poison; <b>Resist 15</b> cold, 15 fire	<b>Saving Throws +5; Action Points 2</b>	
TRAITS		
☀ <b>Baleful Presence (fire)</b> ◆ <b>Aura 5</b>		
Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to saving throws. Devil allies that drop to 0 hit points in the aura explode, dealing each creature adjacent to the devil 15 fire damage.		
Action Recovery		
Whenever the embassy ends its turn, any dazing or stunning effect on the embassy ends.		
All-Around Vision		
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the embassy.		
Juggernaut		
The embassy ignores difficult terrain and provokes no opportunity attacks. It cannot squeeze or grab.		
Living Vehicle		
Creatures can enter the embassy's space by climbing onto it (DC 20). Creatures in the embassy's space move with the embassy as if it were a vehicle.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
☼ <b>Hellish Meteor (fire, force)</b> ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
<b>Attack:</b> Area 2 within 20 (creatures in the burst); +25 vs. Reflex		
<b>Hit:</b> 2d12 + 18 fire and force damage.		
<b>Miss:</b> Half damage.		
<b>Effect:</b> Four legion devil legionnaires appear in unoccupied squares in the area and act immediately after the embassy in the initiative order.		
<b>Str 20 (+16)</b>	<b>Dex 24 (+18)</b>	<b>Wis 24 (+18)</b>
<b>Con 26 (+19)</b>	<b>Int 6 (+9)</b>	<b>Cha 6 (+9)</b>
<b>Alignment evil</b>	<b>Languages</b> understands all	

<b>Legion Devil Legionnaire</b>	<b>Level 21 Minion Soldier</b>	
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 800 each	
<b>HP 1</b> , a missed attack never damages a minion. <b>Initiative +13</b>		
<b>AC 37, Fortitude 33, Reflex 32, Will 32</b>	<b>Perception +11</b>	
<b>Speed 7</b> , teleport 3	<b>Darkvision</b>	
<b>Resist 15</b> fire		
TRAITS		
Squad Defense		
The legionnaire gains a +2 bonus to all defenses while it is adjacent to at least one other legion devil.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Longsword (weapon)</b> ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
<b>Attack:</b> Melee 1 (one creature); +26 vs. AC		
<b>Hit:</b> 14 damage.		
<b>Str 14 (+12)</b>	<b>Dex 12 (+11)</b>	<b>Wis 12 (+11)</b>
<b>Con 14 (+12)</b>	<b>Int 10 (+10)</b>	<b>Cha 12 (+11)</b>
<b>Alignment evil</b>	<b>Languages</b> Supernal	
<b>Equipment</b> plate armor, heavy shield, longsword		

## Predator Chariot

Goblins are consummate beastmasters who breed animals and monsters for their vile purposes. One such experiment warped steel predators into living vehicles known as predator chariots. The chariot consists of an enclosed carriage with two doors that its crew can bar from the inside. The carriage has two arrow slits, plus space for warriors to ride atop it.

**Inspired by War:** According to hobgoblin warcasters, the first predator chariots were created deep within the Chernoggar breeding pits in honor of Bane. Specially bred steel predators, stunted by magic and tinkering, were attached to metal carriages covered in vile runes. Their chariots turned out to be far more maneuverable than any similar, horse-drawn vehicle.

**A Predator's Mind:** The steel predator is only faintly aware of the predator chariot to which it is attached. Constant handling is needed to keep the chariot in line. If left unattended for too long, it begins to act like a savage beast.

<b>Predator Chariot</b>	<b>Level 16 Elite Soldier</b>	
Huge immortal animate (construct)	XP 2,800	
<b>HP 320; Bloodied 160</b>	<b>Initiative +15</b>	
<b>AC 32, Fortitude 29, Reflex 28, Will 27</b>	<b>Perception +12</b>	
<b>Speed 7</b>	<b>Darkvision</b>	
<b>Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1</b>		
TRAITS		
Juggernaut		
The chariot ignores difficult terrain and provokes no opportunity attacks. It cannot squeeze or grab.		
Living Vehicle		
Creatures can enter the chariot's space by climbing onto it (DC 15) or entering through one of its two doors (one on each side). Creatures in the chariot's space move with the chariot as if it were a vehicle.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⊕ <b>Slashing Fury</b> ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
<b>Attack:</b> Melee 1 (one creature); +21 vs. AC		
<b>Hit:</b> 2d10 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.		
↓ <b>Predatory Dash</b> ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
<b>Effect:</b> The chariot moves up to its speed. Each time the chariot moves adjacent to an enemy for the first time during the move, it makes a <i>slashing fury</i> attack against that enemy.		
↶ <b>Resonant Roar (thunder)</b> ◆ <b>Recharge</b> ☼ ☼ or if the chariot takes lightning or thunder damage		
<b>Attack:</b> Close burst 3 (creatures in the burst but not in the chariot's space); +19 vs. Fortitude		
<b>Hit:</b> 2d8 + 15 thunder damage, and the target is deafened and dazed (save ends both).		
<b>Str 24 (+15)</b>	<b>Dex 21 (+13)</b>	<b>Wis 19 (+12)</b>
<b>Con 24 (+15)</b>	<b>Int 8 (+7)</b>	<b>Cha 6 (+6)</b>
<b>Alignment evil</b>	<b>Languages</b> understands Goblin	

## War Willow Treant

A few treants agree to carry allies into battle. Regardless of the type of tree it resembles, such a treant is called a war willow.

**Blood-Rooted:** War willows root near humanoid and elven villages. They prefer the elves, who treat them as honorary elders.

**Sylvan Team:** A war willow develops strong rapport with the soldiers who ride into war among its branches. Most are masters of ranged attacks.

<b>War Willow Treant</b>	<b>Level 17 Elite Soldier</b>
Huge fey magical beast (plant)	XP 3,200
<b>HP 336; Bloodied 168</b>	<b>Initiative +11</b>
<b>AC 33, Fortitude 30, Reflex 27, Will 28</b>	<b>Perception +15</b>
<b>Speed 8 (forest walk)</b>	<b>Low-light vision</b>
<b>Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1</b>	
<b>TRAITS</b>	
☼ <b>Wrathful Roots</b> ◆ <b>Aura 3</b>	
The aura is difficult terrain for nonflying enemies. Enemies must make a DC 23 Acrobatics or Athletics check to stand up in the aura.	
<b>Living Vehicle</b>	
Creatures can enter the treant's space by climbing onto it (DC 15). Creatures in the treant's space move with the treant as if it were a vehicle.	
<b>Threatening Reach</b>	
The treant can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 3 squares of it.	
<b>Wooden Body</b>	
Whenever the treant takes fire damage, it also takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⬇ <b>Slam</b> ◆ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +22 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 16 damage, the treant slides the target up to 2 squares, and the target falls prone.	
⬇ <b>Trample</b> ◆ <b>At-Will</b>	
Effect: The treant moves up to its speed and can move through enemies' spaces during the move. Each time the treant enters an enemy's space for the first time during the move, the treant makes a <i>slam</i> attack against that enemy.	
<b>Str 26 (+16)</b>	<b>Dex 12 (+9)</b>
<b>Con 24 (+15)</b>	<b>Int 14 (+10)</b>
<b>Wis 25 (+15)</b>	<b>Cha 10 (+8)</b>
<b>Alignment unaligned</b> <b>Languages Common, Elven</b>	

### About the Author

**Claudio Pozas** is a freelance artist and writer whose recent design credits include *Heroes of Shadow™*, *Heroes of the Feywild™*, and many contributions to *Dragon*. He lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with his wife, Paula; his son, Daniel; and his pet dire tiger, Tyler.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

# MECHA

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Mecha



Towering above the landscape like the fabled Titans, mecha are formidable creations that can deal devastating amounts of damage in ways that conventional warriors and vehicles cannot. Given their enormous humanoid forms, they often resemble monsters sent to wreak havoc on civilization. As advanced combat machines, mecha occupy a unique role on the combat landscape; they are as versatile as their pilots, as tough as tanks, and as heavily armed as many starships. This chapter expands upon the mecha rules in Chapter Nine: Mecha of *d20 Future*, providing new options for mecha construction as well as new ways to treat mecha during game play.

## NEW MECHA COMBAT RULES

Standard mecha combat works in much the same way as combat between characters. Just as characters have many options available to them during combat, the pilots of mecha must be equally as versatile if they are to emerge victorious. All mecha pilots can use the following new rules in combat, and certain supplemental rules have been included for the Gamemaster's benefit.

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## Mecha Copilot Actions

Some mecha have a copilot cockpit, allowing another character to ride along inside the mecha and help operate it. Though the basic rules information on page 165 of *d20 Future* detail several potential actions for the copilot, the following section expands upon these. Each action's entry describes rules for use, including activation time.

**Fire Weapons:** As an attack action, the copilot can fire any of the mecha's ranged weapons. This action does not grant the mecha additional attacks. Each ranged weapon can be fired only once (regardless of whether it is fired by the operator or copilot). The copilot can fire only in the direction the weapon is facing when he takes his action, though he can delay his action to act simultaneously with the operator in order to fire in the appropriate direction.

**Operate Sensors:** The copilot can operate the onboard sensor systems (provided the mecha has any installed) as a move action. The copilot can use the sensors to learn any information they normally provide, making a Computer Use check as explained in the description of the sensors.

**Aid Another:** The copilot can use the aid another action to provide a bonus on one of the operator's skill checks. This action functions in exactly the same way as the standard aid another action; the copilot must make at least a DC 10 skill check with the appropriate skill, which provides a +2 bonus on the operator's skill check.

**Emergency Repairs:** The copilot can make emergency repairs to a damaged mecha to keep certain systems running temporarily. Using the Repair skill, the copilot can reroute power, shut down nonessential systems, engage autorepair devices, divert the flow of chemicals and coolants, and perform any number of small but useful actions that temporarily repair damaged systems. Whenever a mecha system or piece of equipment installed in one of the mecha's slots is damaged (either through critical hits or through intentional targeting), the copilot can attempt to return that system to functional status, if only temporarily. The copilot makes a DC 25 Repair check as an attack action; if successful, the damaged or destroyed equipment becomes functional for a number of rounds equal to the copilot's Intelligence modifier (minimum of 1 round).

**Boost Weapon Damage:** By funneling power to mounted weapons and increasing energy efficiency, the copilot can provide a temporary boost to one weapon's damage. As an attack action, the copilot makes a DC 25 Computer Use check; if successful, the copilot increases that weapon's damage dice by one step; d6 becomes d8, d8 becomes d10, d10 becomes d12, and so on. This increase in damage applies only until the next round; if the weapon is not used within 1 round, the bonus disappears and the copilot must once again take this action to boost the weapon's damage. This action can be used only on mounted weaponry and cannot affect carried, held, or thrown weapons.

**Send/Jam Communications:** As a free action, a copilot of a mecha with a comm system can send a transmission in the normal way. Additionally, as a move action the copilot can attempt to jam the communications of another mecha within a range of 1 mile. The copilot makes a Computer Use check to send out jamming static and data noise on all frequencies; to break through that jamming, the operator (or any copilots) of the targeted mecha must make a Computer Use check, with a DC equal to the result of the jamming copilot's original Computer Use check, otherwise no transmissions can be sent.

**Provide Targeting Data:** As a full-round action, any copilot of a mecha with a sensor system can provide targeting data for the operator's attacks, revealing holes in the enemy's defenses or weaknesses in its armor. The copilot makes a DC 15 Computer Use check to provide a +2 equipment bonus on the operator's attack rolls this round.

## Throwing Large Objects

As towering juggernauts that dwarf even buildings, mecha can pick up and hurl large objects as improvised weapons. In urban environments, mecha fling vehicles and even chunks of destroyed buildings at their opponents; in less-developed areas, pieces of earth and stone are equally suitable. Throwing large objects is similar to using any thrown weapon in character combat: The mecha must first pick up the object, and then make a ranged attack against an enemy. The differences in character and mecha combat become evident both in the range of these objects and in the damage they deal.

First, the mecha must be at least one size category larger than the target object to throw it as a ranged weapon, and it must have an empty hand to grasp the object. Though objects that are the same size as the mecha can be picked up, they are too bulky or unwieldy to be thrown effectively in combat. The range increment of the thrown object is determined by the object's size and mass, and a thrown object can target enemies at a maximum of five range increments. The mecha then makes a ranged attack against its target, subtracting 2 from the attack roll for each range increment beyond the first, and if successful the object strikes its target and deals damage. If the object being thrown is two size categories (or more) smaller than the mecha, the mecha's Strength modifier is added to the damage.

Stationary objects, such as pieces of buildings or vehicles without drivers, can be picked up as a move action. If a vehicle or object is moving, the mecha must make a touch attack against that object to attempt to grab it. If the object is inanimate and has no pilot or driver, the mecha successfully grabs the object and can use it as an improvised weapon. If the object is a piloted vehicle, the mecha pilot and the pilot of the vehicle make opposed skill checks (Drive or Pilot, as appropriate for each vehicle); if the mecha pilot is successful, the vehicle has been grabbed and can be thrown, otherwise the vehicle escapes and can continue moving normally.

Consult Table 4-1 for sample objects, range increments, and damage.

**TABLE 4-1: THROWING LARGE OBJECTS**

Object	Size	Increment	Range Damage
Large mecha	Large	30 feet	6d6
Motorcycle	Large	30 feet	4d6
Small car	Large	30 feet	5d6
Stone/concrete fragment	Large	35 feet	5d6
Street lamp	Large	35 feet	4d6
Huge mecha	Huge	60 feet	9d6
Standard car or van	Huge	60 feet	8d6
Stone/concrete chunk	Huge	65 feet	8d6
Telephone pole	Huge	70 feet	8d6
Helicopter or airplane	Gargantuan	130 feet	11d6
Gargantuan mecha	Gargantuan	120 feet	12d6
Tank	Gargantuan	120 feet	12d6
Yacht	Gargantuan	140 feet	10d6



## Sundering Mecha Equipment

When two mecha are engaged in combat, they attempt to destroy the opponent's weapons and equipment to whittle them down to more manageable size. Though damaging mecha equipment in combat can be difficult, the loss of that object's use can be devastating. Similar to striking a held object in character combat, attacking a specific piece of equipment requires targeting a small portion of the opposing mecha's body. The character declares which piece of equipment is being targeted and makes a normal attack roll against that object.

The size of the mecha and that of the targeted equipment determine the object's Defense and hit points. A piece of equipment on a mecha has a base Defense determined by its size and slot; consult Table 4-2 for those values. Objects in the torso or back slots cannot be targeted for sundering, because they are usually tightly integrated into the mecha's main body and an attack against them would be like a normal attack against the mecha. The equipment's final Defense value is equal to:

**Base Defense + mecha's armor bonus to Defense + pilot's Dexterity modifier + pilot's class bonus to Defense + any miscellaneous modifiers to equipment Defense**

Armor bonus to Defense is not calculated into the Defense of any held object, nor in any touch attack. Any combat actions that would add to a pilot's Defense score, such as fighting defensively, also modify this number.

On a successful hit, the attacker rolls damage as normal, subtracting the equipment's hardness (determined by the material of the target mecha's superstructure) before applying the damage. When a piece of equipment reaches half its hit points, it is considered damaged and ceases to function, and when it reaches 0 hit points it is destroyed (see descriptions of damaged and destroyed equipment on page 170 of *d20 Future*). Most pieces of mecha equipment have a number of hit points based on their size; objects carried by Large mecha have an average of 30 hit points, objects carried by Huge mecha have an average of 60 hit points, objects carried by Gargantuan mecha have an average of 90 hit points, while objects carried by Colossal mecha have an average of 120 hit points. More fragile components (such as sensors and computers) might have half as many hit points, while sturdier elements of a mecha might have twice that many hit points. Damage dealt to a piece of mecha equipment does not subtract from the mecha's total hit points.

**TABLE 4-2: MECHA EQUIPMENT BASE DEFENSE**

Slot	Large	Huge	Gargantuan	Colossal
Helmet	11	10	9	8
Visor	12	11	10	9
Cranium	12	11	10	9
Arms	10	9	8	6
Hands	11	10	9	8
Shoulders	10	9	8	6
Belt	12	11	10	9
Legs	10	9	8	6
Boots	11	10	9	8

## Damaging Equipment Slots

When a piece of mecha equipment is destroyed (by reducing it to 0 hit points), that slot on the mecha can be further damaged in order

to render it useless. First, the attacker targets the equipment slot, which must either have a destroyed piece of equipment or have no equipment installed in it. The Defense rating for this slot is the same as for a piece of equipment that would be installed in that slot. If the attack succeeds, roll damage as normal and subtract hardness (determined by the mecha's superstructure). Each slot on a mecha has the equivalent of 10% of the mecha's total maximum hit points (not its current total). Additionally, half of any damage dealt (after subtracting hardness) to a mecha equipment slot is also applied to the mecha's total hit points. Thus, if 40 points of damage are dealt to an equipment slot, the mecha takes 20 points of damage to its total hit points. When that slot reaches half its hit points, the slot is considered damaged; when it reaches 0 hit points, it is destroyed (see descriptions of damaged and destroyed slots on page 170 of *d20 Future*).

## Blowing off Limbs

On occasion, destroying the equipment slots on a mecha will result in limbs being blown off entirely. When this happens, the equipment on those limbs is completely destroyed; new limbs and equipment must be purchased before they will function again. To blow off a limb, all the equipment slots on that limb must be destroyed; this means all hand and arm slots, as well as one shoulder slot, for the arms, and all leg and boot slots, as well as one belt slot, for the legs. Once all the equipment slots are destroyed, the limb is blown off. If a leg is blown off, the mecha falls to the ground and cannot walk or move until a new leg is attached.

Replacing a limb requires a Wealth check with a purchase DC equal to one-half the mecha's total purchase DC. Attaching the replacement limb requires 24 hours of work and a DC 35 Craft (mechanical) check. The limb comes with functional slots just like those on the original limb, though any replacement equipment must be purchased and installed separately.

## Disabled/Destroyed Mecha

When a mecha reaches the end of its bonus hit points, it ceases to function. What happens to the mecha at that point depends on a number of factors. In all cases, the mecha is immediately disabled. The pilot can no longer use any of its systems, cannot move the mecha as normal, and cannot make attacks in the mecha until it is repaired. The pilot can still eject (if using an escape pod) or simply leave the cockpit and fight normally.

However, certain situations make disabled mecha considerably more dangerous to the pilot (and copilot, if there is one). Once a mecha reaches the end of its bonus hit points, the danger to the pilot increases. Not only does the pilot no longer have the cache of hit points to rely on, but also internal hazards can wreak havoc on the pilot as he tries to escape. There is a 10% chance of toxic fumes and gases venting from damaged systems into the cockpit, and a 20% chance of cockpit fires. Use the standard rules for toxic gases (using cyanogen gas from Table 2-5: Poisons in the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*) and fires to adjudicate such situations.

On occasion, a totally destroyed mecha ruptures and explodes, dealing massive damage to both the pilot and any adjacent characters and mecha. Unstable power cores are particularly susceptible to this problem, though even the safest and most efficiently designed mecha sometimes explode. If a mecha reaches the end of its bonus hit points as the result of an attack that deals 50 or more points of damage (after subtracting hardness), the mecha explodes 1d4 rounds later, dealing 12d6 points of damage to the



pilot and any copilots or passengers. Additionally, any characters, vehicles, or objects within 60 feet of the mecha take 10d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 15 half). Certain types of power cores deal more damage when exploding and at greater range, as described in each power core entry.

## MECHA AS WALKING TANKS

The *d20 Future* game assumes that mecha are giant suits of powered armor that, though piloted, depend heavily on the pilot to determine their statistics. This view is more in line with the Japanese take on mecha, wherein the machine is inextricably linked to the pilot and acts as more of a protective shell than as a vehicle. Another way to look at mecha is not as suits of powered armor, but rather giant, walking tanks. This approach does not base the mecha's statistics on the pilot's abilities but rather assumes that the mecha is an independent machine. If this view of mecha fits your game better, the base mecha rules can be modified to better suit this style of play.

Treating mecha as walking tanks alters only the derivation of their statistics. The mecha functions in combat as normal and uses the character combat system as its basis. A mecha of this type has statistics similar to those of characters, but derived differently.

Creating a mecha as a walking tank uses the same methods as applying bonuses under the existing system, but rather than using the pilot's statistics, these bonuses are determined by the mecha's size. In essence, the mecha has its own Strength score, its

own base hit points, and its own Defense. Some statistics, such as attack rolls and Defense, are still based on the pilot character, just like the statistics for vehicles and starships. Use the following methods for deriving mecha statistics:

**Size:** The mecha's size remains unchanged.

**Superstructure:** The mecha's superstructure remains unchanged.

**Armor:** The mecha's armor remains unchanged.

**Armor Penalty:** The mecha's armor penalty remains unchanged.

**Strength:** Consult Table 4-3: Mecha as Vehicles to determine the mecha's base Strength, and then apply the mecha's Strength bonus (based on its size and other equipment) to derive the final value.

**Speed:** The mecha's speed remains unchanged.

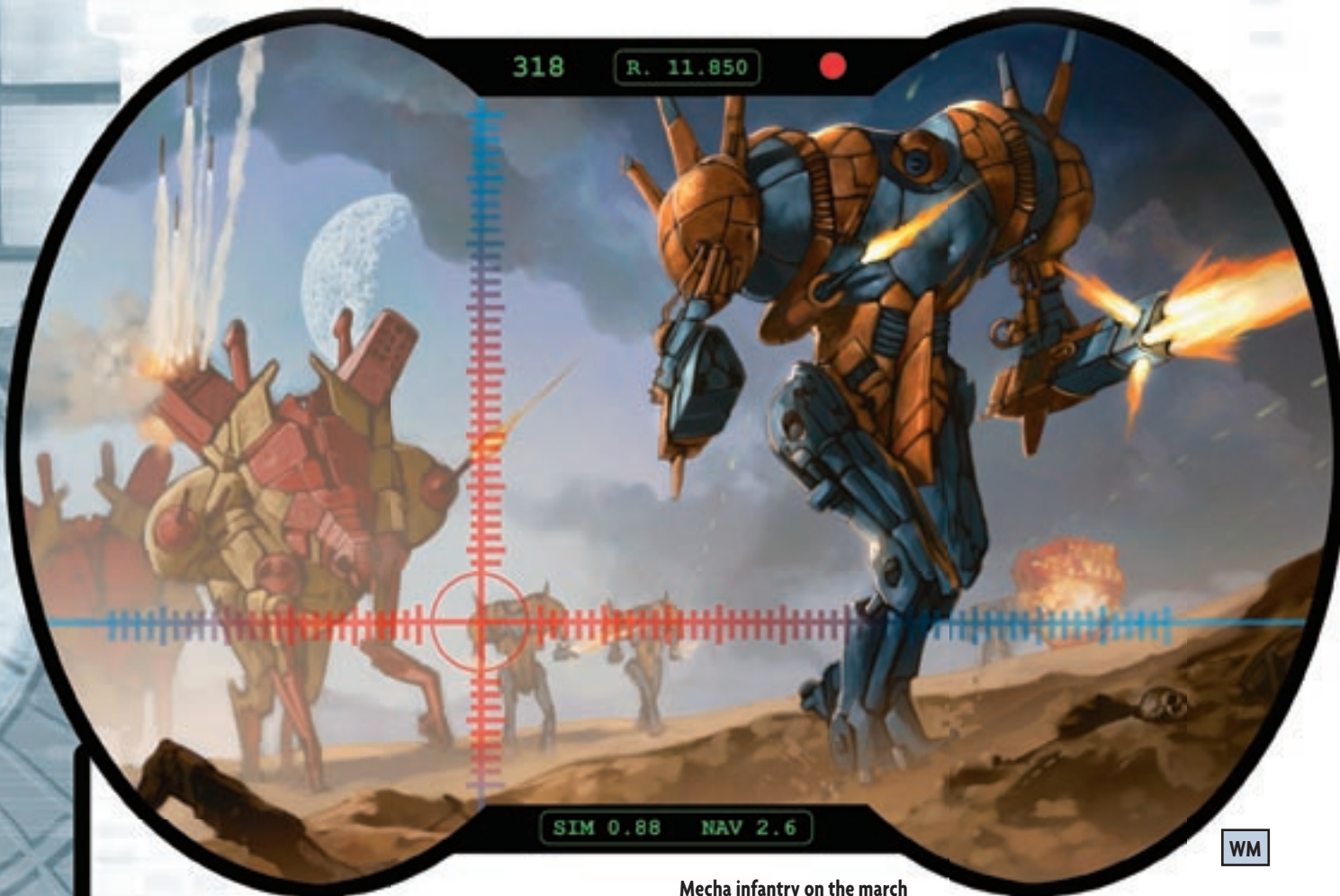
**Hit Points:** Consult Table 4-3 to determine the mecha's base hit points, then apply the mecha's bonus hit points (based on its size and other equipment) to derive the mecha's total hit points.

**Hardness:** The mecha's hardness remains unchanged.

**Defense:** Consult Table 4-3 to determine the mecha's base Defense. Add the mecha's armor bonus to Defense. Add the pilot's Dexterity modifier and class Defense bonus to determine the mecha's total Defense.

**Reach:** The mecha's reach remains unchanged.

**Dexterity:** Consult Table 4-3 to determine the mecha's base Dexterity. Add the pilot's Dexterity bonus to determine the mecha's final Dexterity score.



Mecha infantry on the march

**Initiative:** Use the Dexterity penalty of the mecha, based on the mecha's base Dexterity score. The pilot's Initiative modifier also applies.

**Attacks:** Use the Strength and Dexterity modifiers of the mecha, and apply the pilot's base attack bonus and Dexterity bonus (ranged attacks only). Apply any other attack rolls modifiers from mecha equipment.

**Fighting Space:** The mecha's fighting space and reach remain unchanged.

**Saves:** The mecha has a Fortitude save bonus equal to its Strength bonus, and uses the pilot's Reflex and Will saves (the former of which is modified by the mecha's Dexterity).

**Ability Scores:** The mecha uses its own Strength and Dexterity as detailed above, has a Constitution equal to its Strength, and uses the pilot's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores.

TABLE 4-3: MECHA AS VEHICLES

Mecha Size	Base Str	Base Dex	Defense	Hit Points
Colossal	36	2	2	240
Gargantuan	30	6	6	120
Huge	24	10	8	40
Large	18	10	9	20

The final statistics block for a mecha created in this fashion should look as follows. Assume the pilot has a base attack bonus of +2, a class Defense bonus of +4, a base Reflex save of +3, and a base Will save of +1, and the following ability scores: Str 10, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 13.

**Tempest (PL 7):** Gargantuan-sized mecha; HP 570; Init -1; Spd 50 ft, fly 150 ft (average); Defense 23, touch 9, flat-footed 21; BAB +2; Grap +24; Atk +27 melee (2d8+22, slam or 6d10+22, XJ-A Python electrowhip) or +4 ranged (12d6, Tsumai 480 plasma cannon or 15d6, M-87 Talon missiles or by weapon); FS 20 ft. by 20 ft.; Reach 15 ft.; SV Fort +22, Ref +2, Will +2; AP 14; Str 54, Dex 6, Con 54, Int 14 Wis 12 Cha 13

**Standard Equipment Package:** Pilot's cockpit (torso and belt), Mark III Oracle targeting system (visor), Class IV sensor system (cranium), jet-assist wings (back), Tsunami 480 plasma cannon (left hand, left shoulder, and helmet), Bulwark tactical shield (left arm), M-87 Talon missile launcher (right shoulder), 4-pack of M-87 Talon missiles (right arm), XJ-A Python electrowhip (right hand), HV-5 Haven escape pod (torso), life support system (left leg), thruster boots (boots), 50-hp structural enhancement (1 slot equivalent), comm system (no slots).

## NEW MECHA BASE MODELS

One base model exists for each size category of mecha, each representing the standard mecha of that size. However, entrepreneurial engineers often deviate from the standard design practices and create mecha of drastically different designs. Though the four bodies detailed in *d20 Future* are sufficient for almost all mecha, the following new bodies can be used instead to create unique mecha of alternative configurations.

## Large Scout Walker Mecha

Designed to traverse hazardous terrain and travel long distances quickly, the scout walker mecha body is a stripped-down version of the large mecha, designed to be lightweight and durable. The scout walker forgoes arms and resembles a squat body and head mounted on long, spindly legs. Most scout walker mecha bear light weaponry and have solid defense capabilities, allowing them to dart quickly behind enemy lines, survey the landscape, and report back with their findings. Variations on the scout walker mecha begin appearing early in PL 6 and become increasingly effective, as well as more maneuverable, in later PLs.

**Combat Statistics:** A Large scout walker mecha adds a +8 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score. It imposes a -1 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending on the material used, a Large scout walker mecha has 80 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and subtracted first when the character takes damage. It takes a -4 penalty on Hide checks.

A Large scout walker mecha has a single slam attack that deals 1d8 points of damage (plus the character's increased Strength modifier). Its base speed is 40 feet, and its reach is 10 feet.

**Base Purchase DC:** 44.

**Equipment Slots:** A Large scout walker mecha has 9 equipment slots available. These slots are located as follows.

- Helmet: 1 slot
- Back: 2 slots
- Shoulders: 1 slot
- Torso: 2 slots
- Left leg: 1 slot
- Right leg: 1 slot
- Boots: 1 slot

## Large Heavy Assault Mecha

Appearing on battlefields near the end of PL 6, the Large heavy assault mecha packs an extreme amount of firepower in a relatively small package. These mecha come outfitted with many more slots in prime locations for mounting weaponry and defense systems, often sacrificing important onboard systems to increase the overall payload. Instead of expensive advanced computer systems or elaborate defense technology, the Large heavy assault mecha bristles with weaponry. Many military units replace their tanks and other artillery vehicles with heavy assault mecha, sending them plunging into battle where their slower predecessors once dominated the battlefield.

**Combat Statistics:** A Large heavy assault mecha adds a +8 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score. It imposes a -1 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending on the material used, a Large heavy assault mecha has 100 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and subtracted first when the character takes damage. It takes a -4 penalty on Hide checks.

A Large heavy assault mecha has a single slam attack that deals 1d8 points of damage (plus the character's increased Strength modifier). Its base movement is 30 feet, and its reach is 10 feet.

**Base Purchase DC:** 44.

**Equipment Slots:** A Large heavy assault mecha has 9 equipment slots available. These slots are located as follows.



Helmet: 1 slot	Right hand: 1 slot
Back: 1 slot	Shoulders: 1 slot
Left arm: 1 slot	Torso: 1 slot
Left hand: 1 slot	Boots: 1 slot
Right arm: 1 slot	

## Huge Command Mecha

In much the same way that battlefield commanders issue orders from the safety and privacy of a central command post, they use Huge command mecha not only as powerful combat machines but also as the personal mecha of commanders, general, admirals, and other military leaders. Originally conceived as mobile command posts, these mecha boast impressive communications arrays and targeting systems that relay combat data to other mecha units to more efficiently coordinate a battle plan. Most command mecha have at least one copilot or passenger station, usually reserved for a tactical officer or lieutenant who works as the commander's personal aide.

**Combat Statistics:** A Huge command mecha adds a +16 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score. It imposes a -2 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending on the material used, a Huge command mecha has 200 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and subtracted first when the character takes damage. It takes a -8 penalty on Hide checks.

A Huge command mecha has a single slam attack that deals 2d6 points of damage (plus the character's increased Strength modifier). Its base speed is 40 feet, and its reach is 10 feet.

**Base Purchase DC:** 46.

**Equipment Slots:** A Huge command mecha has 13 equipment slots available. These slots are located as follows.

Helmet: 2 slots	Right hand: 1 slot
Visor: 1 slot	Shoulders: 1 slot
Back: 1 slot	Torso: 2 slots
Left arm: 1 slot	Belt: 1 slot
Left hand: 1 slot	Boots: 1 slot
Right arm: 1 slot	

## Huge Infantry Mecha

The counterpart to the command mecha and the elite combat unit of the PL 6 battlefields, the Huge infantry mecha is both an all-purpose warrior mecha and a support unit for front-line ground troops. These infantry mecha spare no expense in arms and armor and are frequently called upon to travel the length of the battlefield to get to the area they are needed most. Huge infantry mecha are the most mobile mecha of their size, allowing them to be versatile yet pack a significant punch. Most Huge infantry mecha are outfitted with weapons and defense systems, leaving the communications and sensor suites to their command mecha.

**Combat Statistics:** A Huge infantry mecha adds a +16 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score. It imposes a -2 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending on the material used, a Huge infantry mecha has 250 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and subtracted first when the character takes damage. It takes a -8 penalty on Hide checks.

A Huge infantry mecha has a single slam attack that deals 2d6 points of damage (plus the character's increased Strength modifier). Its base movement is 50 feet, and its reach is 15 feet.

**Base Purchase DC:** 48.

**Equipment Slots:** A Huge infantry mecha has 15 equipment slots available. These slots are located as follows.

Helmet: 1 slot	Right hand: 1 slot
Visor: 1 slot	Shoulders: 2 slots
Back: 2 slots	Torso: 1 slot
Left arm: 2 slots	Belt: 1 slot
Left hand: 1 slot	Boots: 1 slot
Right arm: 2 slots	

## Gargantuan Deep Space Mecha

As humanity expands into the stars, the need increases for mecha that can operate on other worlds. In fact, many battlefields stretch over hostile planets and across entire solar systems. Most Gargantuan deep space mecha are equipped to fight not only in the frigid depths of space, but also on remote worlds with environments that are inhospitable to human life. These mecha often act as scouts and perform intelligence gathering in areas that are too dangerous for lighter scout walkers.

**Combat Statistics:** A Gargantuan deep space mecha adds a +24 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score and a -2 penalty to Dexterity. It imposes a -4 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending on the material used, a Gargantuan deep space mecha has 500 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and subtracted first when the character takes damage. It takes a -12 penalty on Hide checks.

A Gargantuan deep space mecha has a single slam attack that deals 2d8 points of damage (plus the character's increased Strength modifier). Its base speed is 50 feet, and its reach is 15 feet.

**Base Purchase DC:** 54.

**Equipment Slots:** A Gargantuan deep space mecha has 20 equipment slots available. These slots are located as follows.

Helmet: 2 slots	Right hand: 1 slot
Visor: 1 slot	Shoulders: 2 slots
Cranium: 1 slot	Torso: 4 slots
Back: 2 slots	Belt: 1 slot
Left arm: 1 slot	Left leg: 1 slot
Left hand: 1 slot	Right leg: 1 slot
Right arm: 1 slot	Boots: 1 slot

## Gargantuan Siege Mecha

Designed to take on everything from entrenched fortresses to small starships, the Gargantuan siege mecha functions as the main muscle in any invasion force. In addition to providing great strength of arms, these massive battle platforms act as one-mecha armies. Gargantuan siege mecha lay waste to large swaths of enemy forces and devastate enemy mecha. Many of these mecha are outfitted with a configuration of weapons and sensor systems specifically for use against other mecha; these "mecha-hunters" are the bane of mecha pilots and can take down opposing mecha quickly.

**Combat Statistics:** A Gargantuan siege mecha adds a +24 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score and a -2 penalty to Dexterity. It imposes a -4 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending on the material used, a Gargantuan siege mecha has 400 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and subtracted first when the character takes damage. It takes a -12 penalty on Hide checks.

A Gargantuan siege mecha has a single slam attack that deals 2d8 points of damage (plus the character's increased Strength modifier). Its base speed is 50 feet, and its reach is 15 feet.

**Base Purchase DC:** 54.

**Equipment Slots:** A Colossal mecha has 21 equipment slots available. These slots are located as follows.

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Helmet: 1 slot     | Right hand: 1 slot |
| Visor: 1 slot      | Shoulders: 2 slots |
| Cranium: 1 slot    | Torso: 2 slots     |
| Back: 2 slots      | Belt: 1 slot       |
| Left arm: 2 slots  | Left leg: 2 slots  |
| Left hand: 1 slot  | Right leg: 2 slots |
| Right arm: 2 slots | Boots: 1 slot      |

## Colossal Sentinel Mecha

One of the most common mecha body types used for defense purposes, the Colossal sentinel mecha looms over the landscape like a vigilant god, waiting to impose its will on any who would dare attack its terrain. Pairs of these Colossal sentinel mecha flank the heavily guarded entrances to enormous city-states, while others roam the landscape in search of enemy forces. Colossal sentinel mecha are primarily defense in nature, able to take a significant beating and still hold their ground. Many Colossal sentinel mecha support conventional troops, and though the battlefield is a significantly different place in PL 7 and 8 when these enormous machines become commonplace, they still fill a role as walls against which waves of enemies break.

**Combat Statistics:** A Colossal sentinel mecha adds a +32 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score and a -4 penalty to Dexterity. It imposes a -8 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending on the material used, a Colossal sentinel mecha has 1,000 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and subtracted first when the character takes damage. It takes a -16 penalty on Hide checks.

A Colossal sentinel mecha has a single slam attack that deals 4d6 points of damage (plus the character's increased Strength modifier). Its base speed is 60 feet, and its reach is 15 feet.

**Base Purchase DC:** 60.

**Equipment Slots:** A Colossal mecha has 23 equipment slots available. These slots are located as follows.

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Helmet: 2 slots   | Right hand: 1 slot |
| Visor: 1 slot     | Shoulders: 2 slots |
| Cranium: 1 slot   | Torso: 4 slots     |
| Back: 2 slots     | Belt: 2 slots      |
| Left arm: 1 slot  | Left leg: 2 slots  |
| Left hand: 1 slot | Right leg: 2 slots |
| Right arm: 1 slot | Boots: 1 slot      |

## Colossal Walking Fortress Mecha

The most advanced and dangerous mecha have Colossal walking fortress mecha bodies. Focusing almost entirely on offensive power, the Colossal walking fortress mecha are the battleships of the mecha world. They often have more weapons than they can wield at any one time, contain a versatile array of armaments capable of punching through any defenses, and display an unwavering ability to devastate almost any enemy military force. A clash between two Colossal walking fortress mecha leaves a huge radius of destruction in its wake, and when one mecha emerges victorious from such a terrific conflict, the other is usually in no condition to keep fighting. When militaries field entire regiments of Colossal walking fortress mecha, only a barren wasteland remains after the battle.

**Combat Statistics:** A Colossal walking fortress mecha adds a +32 equipment bonus to a character's Strength score and a -4 penalty to Dexterity. It imposes a -8 size penalty on attack rolls and to Defense. Depending on the material used, a Colossal walking fortress mecha has 800 bonus hit points, which are added to the character's total and subtracted first when the character takes damage. It takes a -16 penalty on Hide checks.

A Colossal walking fortress mecha has a single slam attack that deals 4d6 points of damage (plus the character's increased Strength modifier). Its base speed is 60 feet, and its reach is 15 feet.

**Base Purchase DC:** 64.

**Equipment Slots:** A Colossal mecha has 30 equipment slots available. These slots are located as follows.

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Helmet: 2 slots     | Right arm: 2 slots |
| Visor: 1 slot       | Shoulders: 4 slots |
| Cranium: 1 slot     | Torso: 4 slots     |
| Back: 3 slots       | Belt: 2 slots      |
| Left arm: 2 slots   | Left leg: 2 slots  |
| Left hand: 2 slots  | Right leg: 2 slots |
| Right hand: 2 slots | Boots: 1 slot      |

## MECHA MODIFICATIONS

Not all mecha are created equally, a fact that is apparent by looking at the work produced by any mecha manufacturer or chop shop. Some modifications drastically change the way the mecha functions, while others simply modify the body in a way that it differs significantly from the standard. The following mecha modifications can be applied to any mecha.

### Adding New Equipment Slots

Though most base models come with a number of equipment slots that determine the base cost of the mecha, it is possible to modify a mecha to have more than its standard number of slots.

**TABLE 4-4: ADDING EQUIPMENT SLOTS**

Original Slots	New Slots	Craft Check DC	Time Taken	Raw Materials Purchase DC
1	2	25	12 hours	20
2	3	30	24 hours	22
3	4	35	36 hours	26
4	5	40	48 hours	30
5	6	45	72 hours	34
6	7	50	96 hours	40



A metabot

No body part of any mecha can have more than one additional slot, though each body part can have an increased number of slots. Each additional slot increases the purchase DC of the mecha by 1. Use this method when calculating the overall cost of a mecha being purchased already built.

If a character wishes to modify an existing mecha to include more equipment slots or to build a mecha from scratch, the process is more complicated. First, the character must purchase the base model at its normal purchase DC, then select the body parts to have extra slots. The character must also purchase raw materials and spare parts used in the modification. The character then makes a Craft (mechanical) check against a DC determined by the original number of slots for the body part being added to. The time taken to perform this modification is also based on the number of slots originally possessed by that body part; see Table 4-4: Adding Equipment Slots for the Craft check DC, time taken, and raw materials cost.

### Transforming Mecha

Some mecha can reconfigure themselves to take on entirely different forms with entirely different weapons and equipment. In essence, these mecha are two separate machines that share the same basic superstructure. These transforming mecha can have drastically different forms, even turning into other vehicles and starships, while still maintaining the same operator and basic computer systems. Mecha of any given size can transform only into mecha and vehicles of that same size; thus, Gargantuan mecha can transform only into other Gargantuan mecha or Gargantuan starships. The operator of the mecha triggers the transformation, which requires a full-round action to complete. Transforming mecha can only be purchased or built from the ground up; the transforming option cannot be added to an existing mecha that does not already have that option.

Mecha that transform into other mecha have two distinct bodies. These two mecha bodies need not have the same weapons or equipment, though often they do for ease of operation and logistics. The only restriction in the two forms of a mecha is that their superstructure must use the same material. Choose two mecha forms; the more expensive of the two provides the base purchase DC, with a +4 modifier for the transformation ability.

Mecha can also have a vehicular or starship alternate form. This alternate form must be of the same size category as the mecha, but behaves in exactly the same way as a mecha alternate form. Again, the base purchase DC is determined by the more expensive of the two forms, with a +4 modifier for the transformation ability.

#### COLOSSAL TRANSFORMING MECHA

From a logistics standpoint, all mecha of Colossal size have a much greater array of vehicles and starships to choose from for their alternate forms. However, Gamemasters should make sure the alternate form is of similar size and mass to the mecha form before allowing that form to be chosen. Current physics dictate that an object has a fixed mass, and though the transformation module can account for small variations in size, at a certain point these alternate forms begin to stretch credulity. Typically, starships larger than the Light subtype are unsuitable for alternate forms.



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## Metabots

Some mecha have the capability to come together and form larger mecha. Known as metabots, these combined, larger mecha function as any other mecha would, but have several copilots who work in tandem to produce more potent effects. A metabot is more than simply the sum of its parts; the smaller mecha combine to create a powerful new form that is devastating to smaller targets.

Only mecha created or purchased at the same time can combine to create a metabot, whose form is chosen at that time. All mecha combining to form a metabot must be of the same size and must have the metabot link equipment (see page 77). Additionally, all the metabots must be present and able to form the metabot for the process to work; if any are destroyed or missing, the metabot cannot be formed.

The metabot is essentially a completely new mecha, and while it need not have the same equipment or weapons as its component mecha, it often does for simplicity's sake. The metabot form, chosen at the time of purchase or construction, is built exactly as a standard mecha, with one exception. The metabot gains a number of copilot cockpits equal to one less than the number of component mecha for free; so, a metabot composed of five component mecha gains four free copilot cockpits. However, additional copilot cockpits and passenger cockpits must be installed in equipment slots as normal, and there must be enough to handle copilots and passengers from the component mecha. All remaining equipment slots can be filled as normal.

Forming a metabot is a full-round action and must be initiated by all the operators of the mecha forming the metabot in the same round. When the metabot is formed, one operator is chosen as the new metabot's operator; the remaining operators become copilots. If any of the mecha have copilots or passengers of their own, they become copilots or passengers aboard the metabot. If any of the mecha have taken damage prior to forming the metabot, that damage is also subtracted from the metabot's hit point total. Similarly, if the metabot takes damage and then breaks down into its component mecha, that damage is divided evenly among the smaller mecha upon separation. Likewise, if any equipment slots have been damaged or destroyed, those damaged slots are distributed among the component mecha. The metabot can be disassembled into its component mecha as a full-round action, and does so whenever any one of the component mecha operators wishes.

In combat, the single operator of the metabot (determined either at the time of creation or purchase, or when the metabot is formed) controls the metabot's movement and melee attacks. The operators of all the component mecha become copilots and can perform any of the normal copilot actions for the metabot. If the metabot's bonus hit points are depleted, the operator of the metabot takes all remaining damage as normal. If a metabot is reduced to 0 bonus hit points, it breaks down into its component mecha and distributes the damage evenly among them.

## MECHA GEAR

The technology behind mecha is as varied and limitless as the technology that powers any other weapon of war. New weapons, armors, defense systems, and sensor arrays are constantly being invented that provide new options for outfitting mecha with the latest and greatest equipment. The following new gear options are available for all mecha.

## Mecha Superstructure

The following new type of superstructure is available for mecha construction.

### Cerametal (PL 7)

The same ceramic compound used in some starships, cerametal superstructures provide toughness and durability at a fraction of the weight of other materials. Though not quite as tough as some metals, cerametal's reduced weight makes the sacrifice in hardness a solid trade. Most mecha have some cerametal parts in nonessential sections, but the cerametal superstructure is more rare.

**Hardness:** 30.

**Base Purchase DC Modifier:** +8.

## Mecha Armor

The following new types of armor are available for mecha construction.

### Belenus Heat-Diffusing Armor (PL 6)

Designed for use in areas of extreme high temperatures, Belenus armor deflects heat and keeps the armor cool. Many mecha operating on planets close to their suns or on worlds with high volcanic activity have Belenus armor installed to protect them from the intense ambient heat. In combat, the Belenus armor system provides a +8 bonus on all saves against fire or heat.

**Equipment Bonus:** +6.

**Armor Penalty:** -5.

**Speed Penalty:** None.

**Purchase DC:** 10 + one-half the mecha's base purchase DC.

### Darkstar Stealth Armor (PL 6)

Darkstar stealth armor plating is based on the stealth materials used in PL 5 aircraft. Using sensor-deflecting metals and a signal-scrambling polymer coating, stealth armor not only provides protection against incoming attacks, but also imposes a -5 penalty on all Computer Use checks to use sensors to scan or detect the mecha.

**Equipment Bonus:** +5.

**Armor Penalty:** -4.

**Speed Penalty:** None.

**Purchase DC:** 8 + one-half the mecha's base purchase DC.

### Ion-Diffusing Armor (PL 6)

Ion damage can completely incapacitate a mecha. To counter this effect, engineers created special armor that grounds the mecha and prevents ion damage from harming its internal systems. Ion-diffusing armor provides ion resistance 10, automatically reducing all ion damage sustained by the mecha.

**Equipment Bonus:** +8.

**Armor Penalty:** -6.

**Speed Penalty:** -5 feet.

**Purchase DC:** 10 + one-half the mecha's base purchase DC.

### Chromatic Antilaser Armor (PL 7)

The advent of energy weapons prompted mecha engineers to construct special armor plating that dilutes the damage inflicted by laser weapons. Chromatic antilaser armor coats the entire armor surface with high-density crystal fragments that intercept incoming laser beams and diffuse their energy. Chromatic antilaser

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# The Genin

## A single-class ninja for Oriental Adventures campaigns



by David Howery

In *Oriental Adventures*, the ninja class is handled differently than other characters. At present, the ninja can only be dual-classed, which leads to a double life as a bushi, sohei, wu jen, or yakuza. This can be a little clumsy at times, particularly when deciding whether or not ninja weapons can be used honorably.

Actually, the dual-classed ninja is only partially based on fact. Ninja were divided into three classes. The highest was the jōnin, traditional heads of the ninja families. The middle class was the chūnin, the go-betweens and messengers. The chūnin

are most like the dual-class ninja. The lowest class was the genin, the operatives. Although the genin sometimes led a double life, more often they existed only as ninjas, living in remote base camps deep in the mountains. The genin carried out most of the ninja assignments.

The variant presented in this article is for the single-classed ninja, who is also called the genin. This character can be justified in two ways: either the character leads a double life as a zero-level non-adventurer (merchant, minor official, etc.) or he leads no double life at all.

### Requirements

Genin have the same ability score and alignment requirements as the ninja. The

character must have at least a 14 dexterity and charisma, at least a 15 intelligence, and must be of any non-good alignment. The genin has no prime requisite and cannot gain experience-point bonuses. Only humans can be genin. Genin have the same honor and family requirements as ninja.

Table 1 at the end of this article gives the experience points and hit points figures for the genin (this table should be used instead of Table 22 on p. 19 of *Oriental Adventures*). Genin use the same combat and saving throw tables as thieves.

### Abilities

Genin have all the abilities of a ninja of equal level, including the skills in Table 24 (p. 21, *Oriental Adventures*), ki powers (also on p. 21), and multiple attacks as in Table 36 (p. 28). Genin also use the dexterity adjustments in Table 23 (p. 19, *Oriental Adventures*).

Genin have been trained in their ways since childhood. Therefore, the genin has more skills open to him than the dual-class ninja. The genin have the following extra abilities:

**Hear noise.** This action is performed as a monk of equal level. In addition, the genin can gain information from the noise (i.e., the dimensions of an opened door or gate, how many people are in a room, whether a sleeping person is faking it or not, etc.).

**Disguise.** In most respects, this is the same as the normal ninja ability. The difference is that the genin is able to quickly change out of his disguise — an action which takes one full round.

**Maps.** Genin have excellent senses of direction and are able to memorize landmarks. As a result, they are able to use these abilities to read and accurately render maps.

### Proficiencies

The genin starts at 1st level with five proficiency slots. The genin must have proficiency with the ninja-to and bo stick. The other three slots can be used for non-weapon proficiencies, martial arts, or other permitted weapons. Genin gain one proficiency slot for every three levels beyond the 1st (i.e., at 4th level, 7th level, and so on).

Genin can learn any artisan, common, or court proficiency. Most genin learn horsemanship, dance, animal handling, and small water craft before any other skill. In addition, there are a set of proficiencies open only to genin. These are listed on Table 2 and are described below:

**Binding.** The genin can bind people so that they are unable to move or struggle without causing themselves great pain.

**Leaping.** This is equal to the martial arts special maneuver, Leap (Movement 5), on

pp. 103-4 of *Oriental Adventures* (pp. 103-4).

**Poison.** The genin can prepare poisons that kill by smell, taste, or touch. The genin also knows how to handle and apply these poisons for optimum effect.

**Running.** By controlling his breath, the genin can run 50 miles non-stop. If he spends 15 minutes of every hour walking, he can run 100 miles non-stop.

**Side-walking.** The genin can move his feet in a sideways pattern at one-quarter his normal speed, reducing the chance to track him by 50%.

**Signalling.** The genin is able to send messages with flags, gestures, or objects left behind him. The message will always be short and simple.

**Survival.** This is similar to the barbarian proficiency, except that the genin can only provide for himself.

**Swimming.** The genin is able to swim silently. He is also able to swim in a vertical position, enabling him to hold things out of the water, write, or even use a bow. Otherwise, this skill is the same as the common proficiency of the same name.

**Money, clothing, weapons, and tools**

The genin begins at 1st level with 1-2 ch'ien and 2-20 tael. The genin character does not wear armor, except as a disguise. His usual adventuring costume is the shinobi shozoku, a lightweight suit with jacket, hood, trousers, and tabi boots. This costume costs 12 yuan. It is reddish black, reversible, and has a dark blue lining. The shinobi shozoku has many pockets — enough to carry all the genin's usual gear.

The following weapons lists have been included to assist the DM. Note that ninja can use any weapon, but genin are restricted to only those weapons listed below.

**Ninja weapons:** grenade, hankyu, kawanaga, kumade, kusari-gama, kyoketsushogi, metsubishi, needle, nekode, ninja-to, shaken, shuriken (all), and tetsu-bishi.

**Genin weapons:** arrow (all), blowpipe and dart, bo stick, chain, halberd, kama, kiseru, shakujō-yari, shikomi-zue, and spear.

**Martial arts weapons:** any such weapons is permissible, provided the character has

proficiency in a martial arts weapon skill. The following items are often carried by ninja and genin. Other items may be added as desired.

**Climbing tools**

Nekode, te-kagi: clawed devices for gripping smooth stone (+ 5% on climb walls).

Musubinawa: short, strong, horsehair rope.

Shinobi kumade: telescoping bamboo rod with grapnel hook on one end.

**Infiltration tools**

Lock pick, chisel, wood/metal saw, digging knife, springboard.

Tobi-kunai: a multi-purpose tool for digging, prying, boring, cutting, and wedging.

Tsuba-giri: a heavy fork for springing doors.

**Water devices**

Folding straw rafts, small portable boats, snorkel, rope and pulley.

Mizugumo: foot pontoons for walking upright on water.

**Weapon uses for non-combat effects**

Bo stick: This can be used to pole vault up to 8'.

Shuriken, star: The hole in the center can be used to pull nails.

Ninja-to, scabbard: This can be used as a snorkel, club, or lever. Powder or small knives may be stored in the bottom. The long cord attached can serve as a garrotte.

Ninja-to, sword: When sheathed, the character can place the sword against a wall and step on the large hand-guard, using the sword as a 2' stepladder.

**Miscellaneous notes**

The genin character, if not leading a double life, must spend all his non-adventuring time training at his family's base camp.

The ninja of both types are true equal opportunists; that is, men or women may become ninja. Women are more highly respected as ninjas than in most other occupations in the male-dominated Oriental world.

Genin will choose to die before allowing themselves to be captured, since their captors will often resort to torture in an attempt to retrieve information. A genin may carry poison to prevent this, and can even resort to biting his tongue in half to mute his cries.

In addition to the normal penalties, the genin loses 20 points of honor if his family's base camp is discovered. This penalty applies to all genin who belong to the camp, regardless of whether they are actually there at the time or not.

**Table 1  
Genin Experience**

Experience points	Level	6-sided dice for accumulated hp
0-2,500	1	1
2,501-5,000	2	2
5,001-10,000	3	3
10,001-18,000	4	4
18,001-36,000	5	5
36,001-75,000	6	6
75,001-130,000	7	7
130,001-230,000	8	8
230,001-400,000	9	9
400,001-650,000	10	10
650,001-1,000,000	11	10+1
1,000,001-1,300,000	12	10+2

300,000 experience points are required for each level beyond 12th. Genin gain 1 hp per level beyond 10th.

**Table 2  
Genin Proficiencies**

Proficiency	Slots required	Base chance of success
Binding	1	8
Leaping	1	10
Poison	1	8
Running	2	16
Side-walking	1	12
Signaling	1	10
Survival	2	15
Swimming	2	15

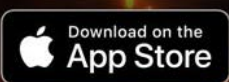
# WARRIORS OF WATERDEEP

BRING THE **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS** EXPERIENCE WITH YOU ON THE GO!



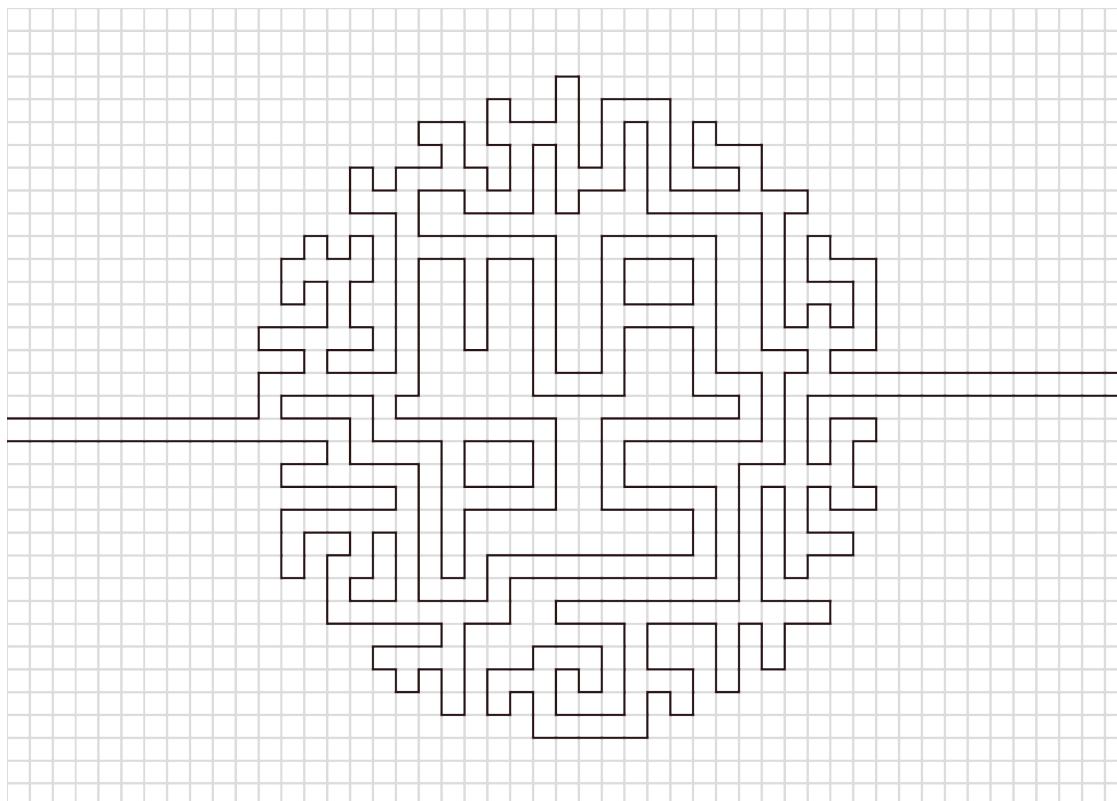
PLAY FOR ADVENTURE. PLAY FOR THE CHALLENGE  
**PLAY WARRIORS OF WATERDEEP**

PLAY NOW!



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# Maps of the Month: Ghosts of Saltmarsh, Barber of Silvermoon, Six Faces of Death



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*WARNING: THESE MAPS MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS FOR  
GHOSTS OF SALTMARSH*

---

## GHOSTS OF SALTMARSH: MAPS

Now that *Ghosts of Saltmarsh* has hit shelves, we hope the following selection of maps—tagged and untagged—will prove helpful in running these adventures or for use in other aquatic locations in your campaigns. And be sure to check back in future issues for further maps from this book!

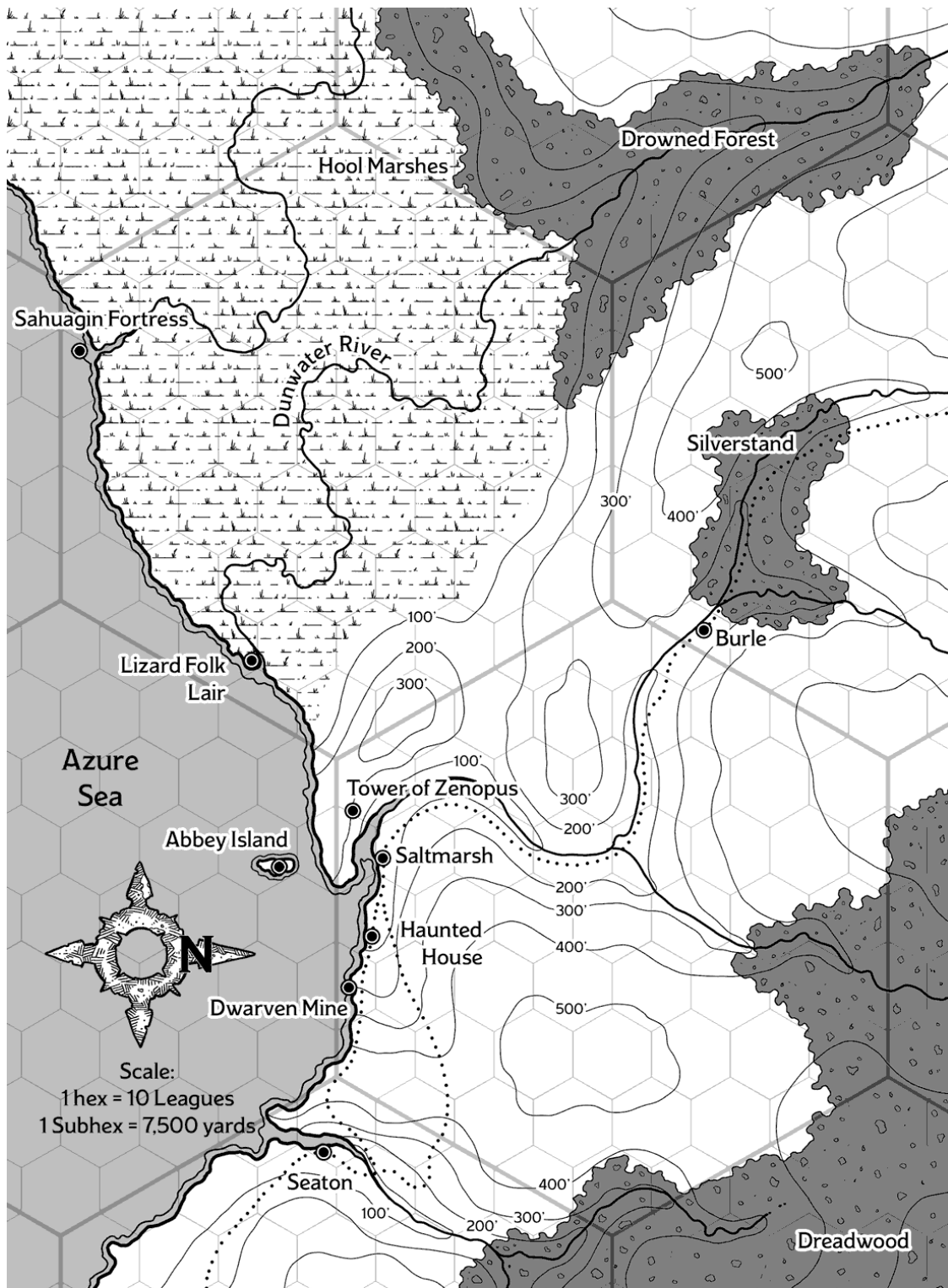
Saltmarsh Region

In the previous issue we provided a look at the seaside resort town of Saltmarsh itself. But where does the town lie within the broader

region? As described, the land immediately outside Saltmarsh is “safe for travelers, as are the roads that cut through the region. Small farms and manor houses dot the area, many maintained by army veterans who were granted land by royal decree. A number of small halfling villages are scattered around the area, located just off the main roads. Such locations consist of several farmhouses clustered around a pub that provides a warm welcome to visitors who come in peace.”

However, once you journey off the beaten path, a variety of threats emerge from the swampy wilderness. These areas are “filled with peril, since much of the region is untamed wilderness. Even though the Kingdom of Keoland has grand ambitions, its focus in the south remains on the sea. The crown does its best to make sure the roads are safe, but otherwise it is generally content to leave the monsters and vicious tribes of the wilds alone as long as they remain in their habitats.”

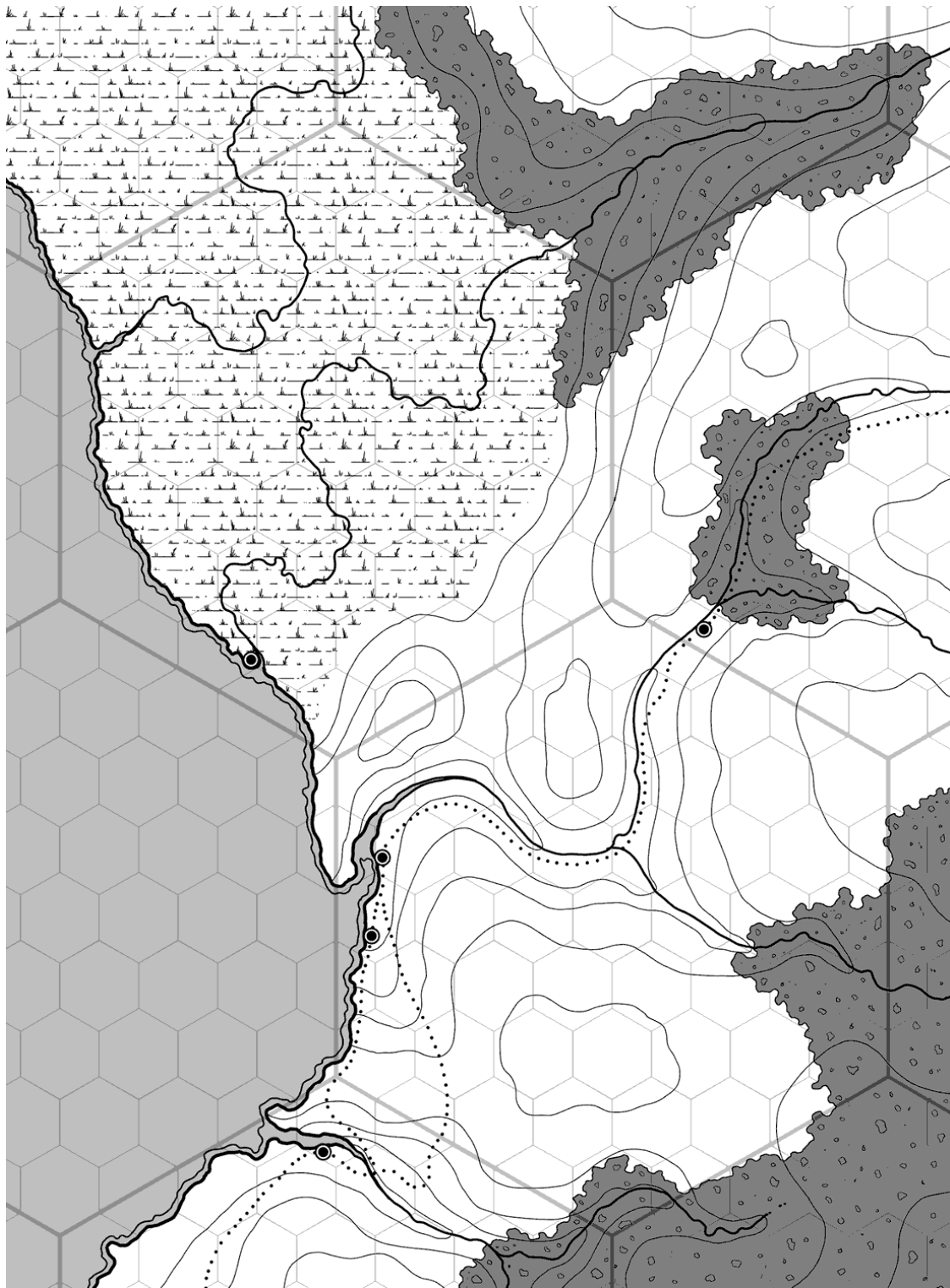
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Untagged



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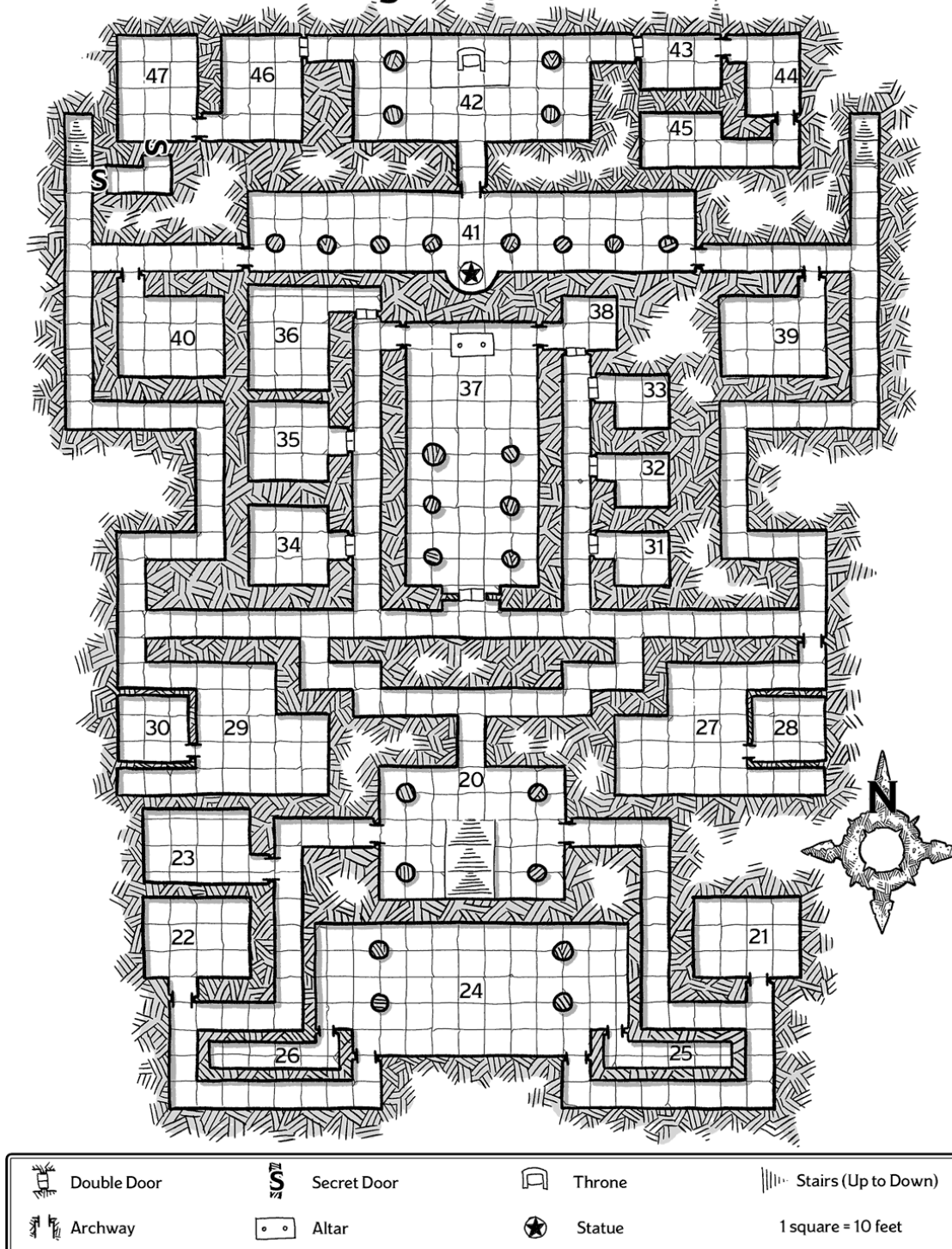
### The Final Enemy

In *Dragon+ 26* we also began our exploration of the dangerous sahuagin lair from *The Final Enemy*. As described, “the fortress and former home to the lizardfolk is a rocky island located at the mouth of the Javan River. When the lizardfolk laired there, the island was

almost entirely above sea level. Thadrah, the sahuagin high priestess of Sekolah, worked ritual magic that sank the island by lowering the seabed.”

From the first level, let’s now descend to the second. Hold your breath, as this level is entirely submerged in seawater.

## Tagged Sahuagin Lair - Level 2

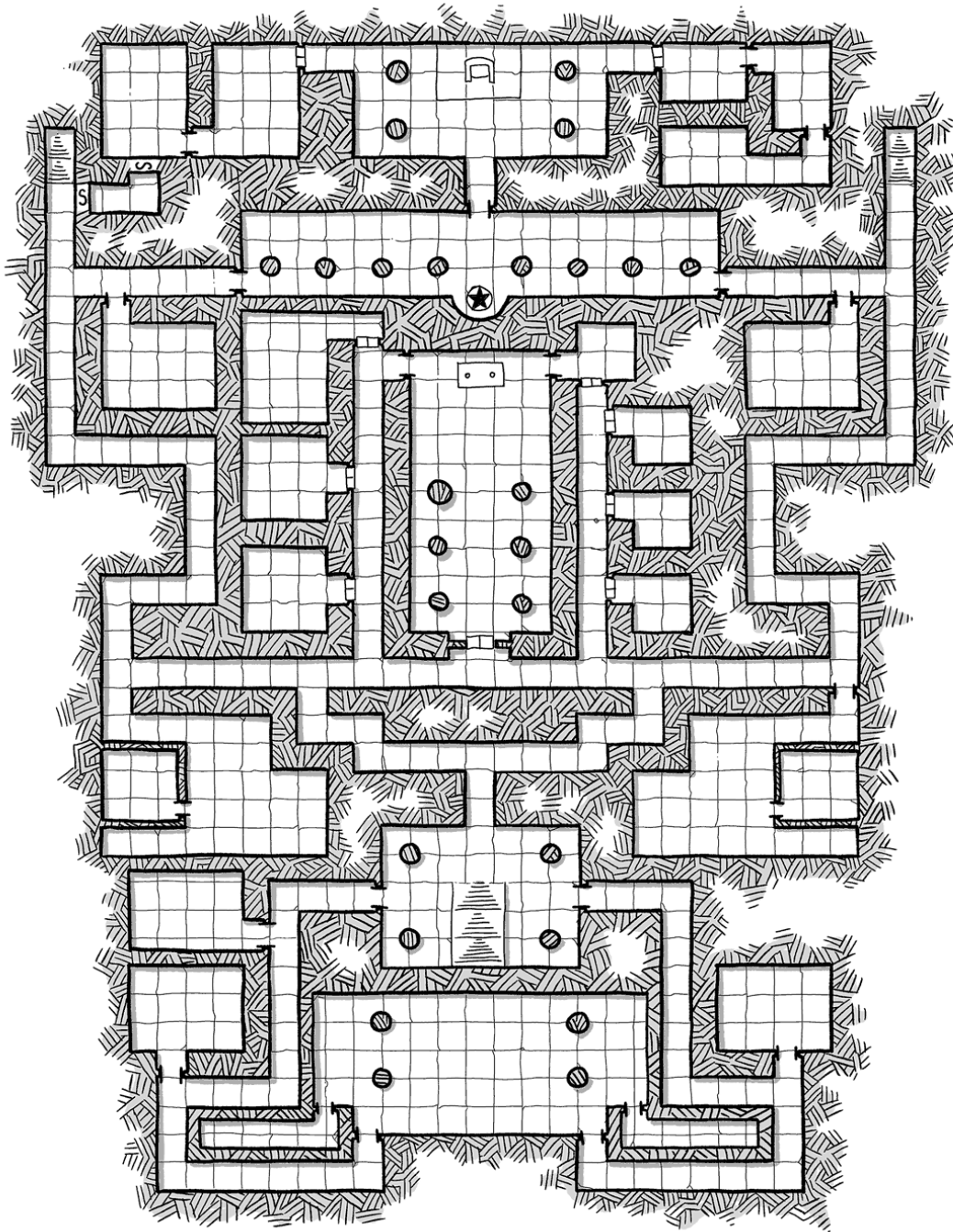


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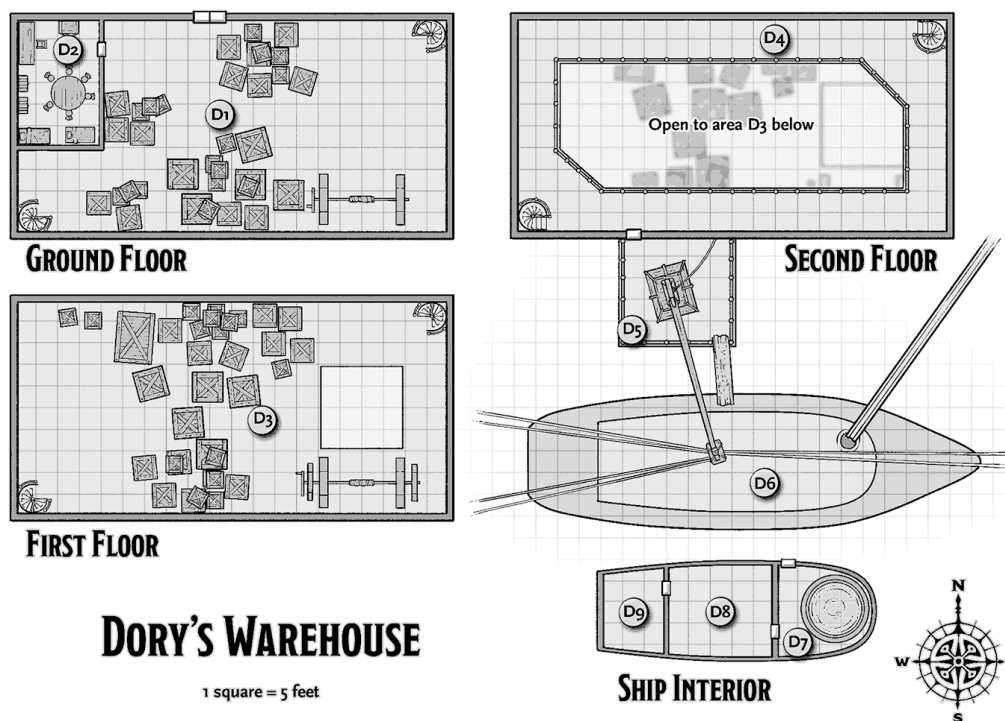
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## The Styes' Warehouse

And finally, we ventured into the decaying port town of The Styes in the previous issue. Now exploring one specific location within this town, we come upon a unique home in the center of the Alchemists' Quarter, perched at the edge of a large swath of mud known as Hemlock Pit. For a bribe of at least 10gp you'll be able to learn that this warehouse is well guarded and protected at night by "vicious guard dogs" (a trio of manticores whose snarling can be heard from the street).

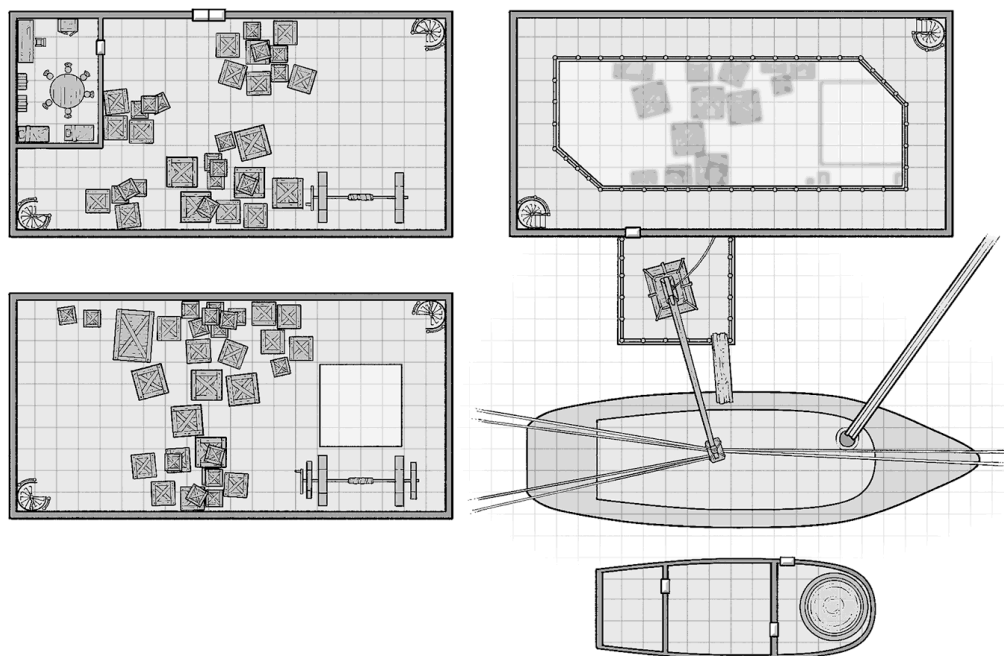
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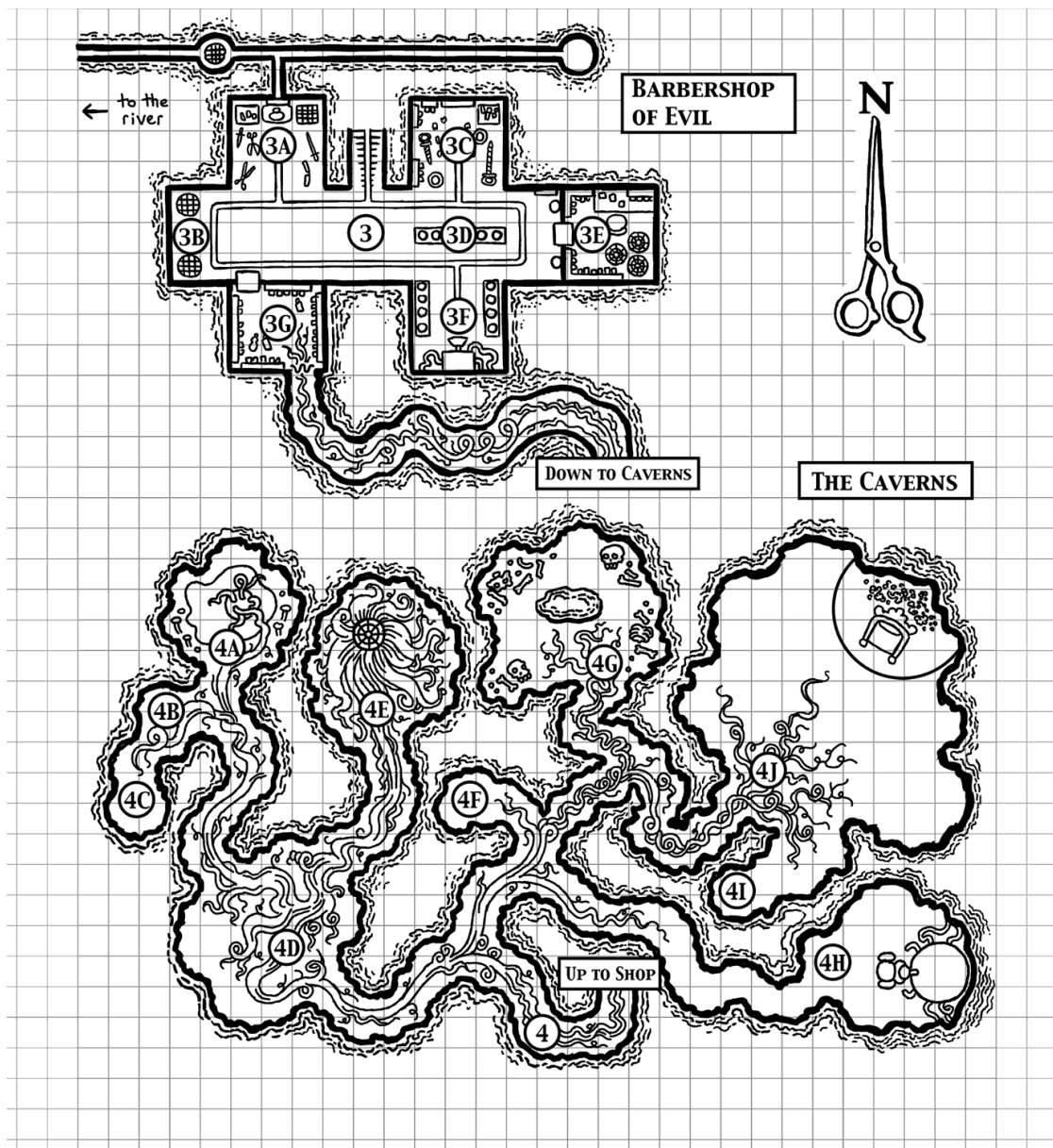
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## BARBER OF SILVERMOON

Back in *Dragon*+ 12 Jason Thompson created a wild (some might even say hair-raising) adventure in support of *Volo's Guide to Monsters*. In the *Barber of Silverymoon* (for characters level 4-6) “people have been disappearing at night in the city of Silverymoon. Some vanish entirely, leaving behind whispered rumors of fiends or other evil creatures having spirited them away. Others return strangely altered, with their memories of having been kidnapped wiped clean and their minds strangely dulled—and always with remarkable haircuts.”

We've now added this entire adventure (for free!) to the **DMs Guild**. As part of its re-release, Jason created new interior maps to help DMs better run his Barbershop of Evil:

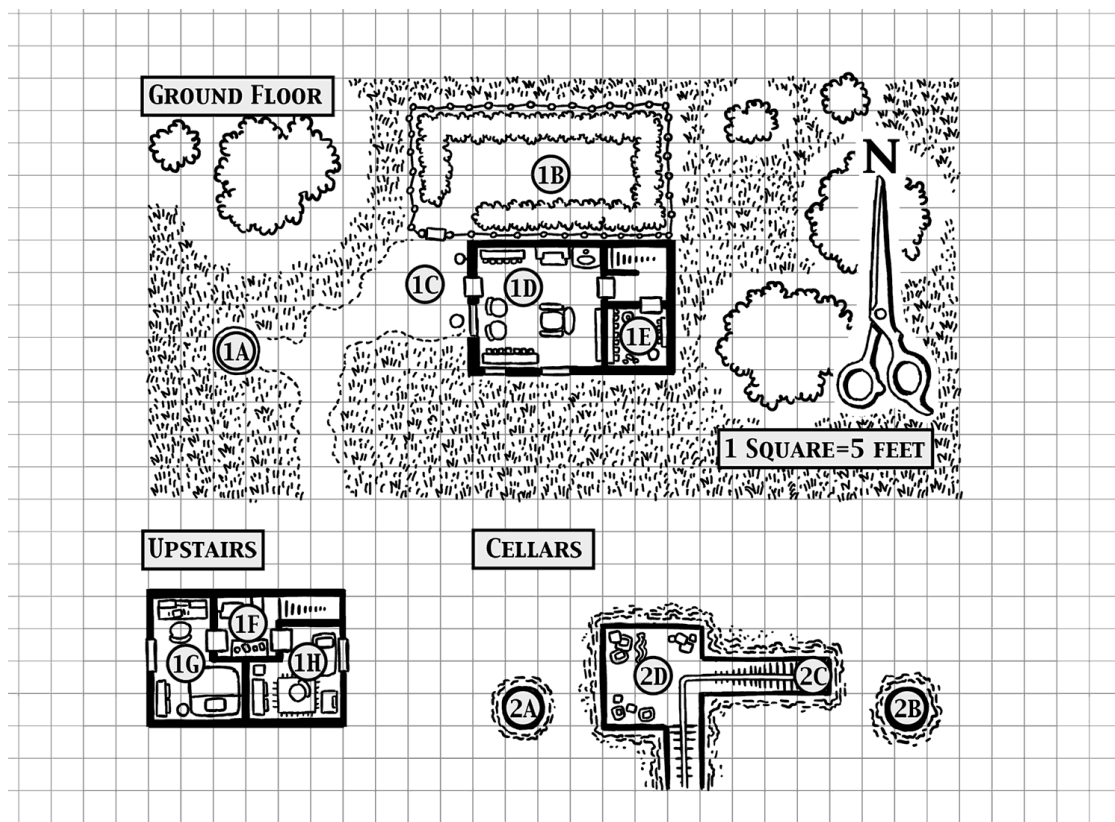
Barber map 1



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Barber map 2



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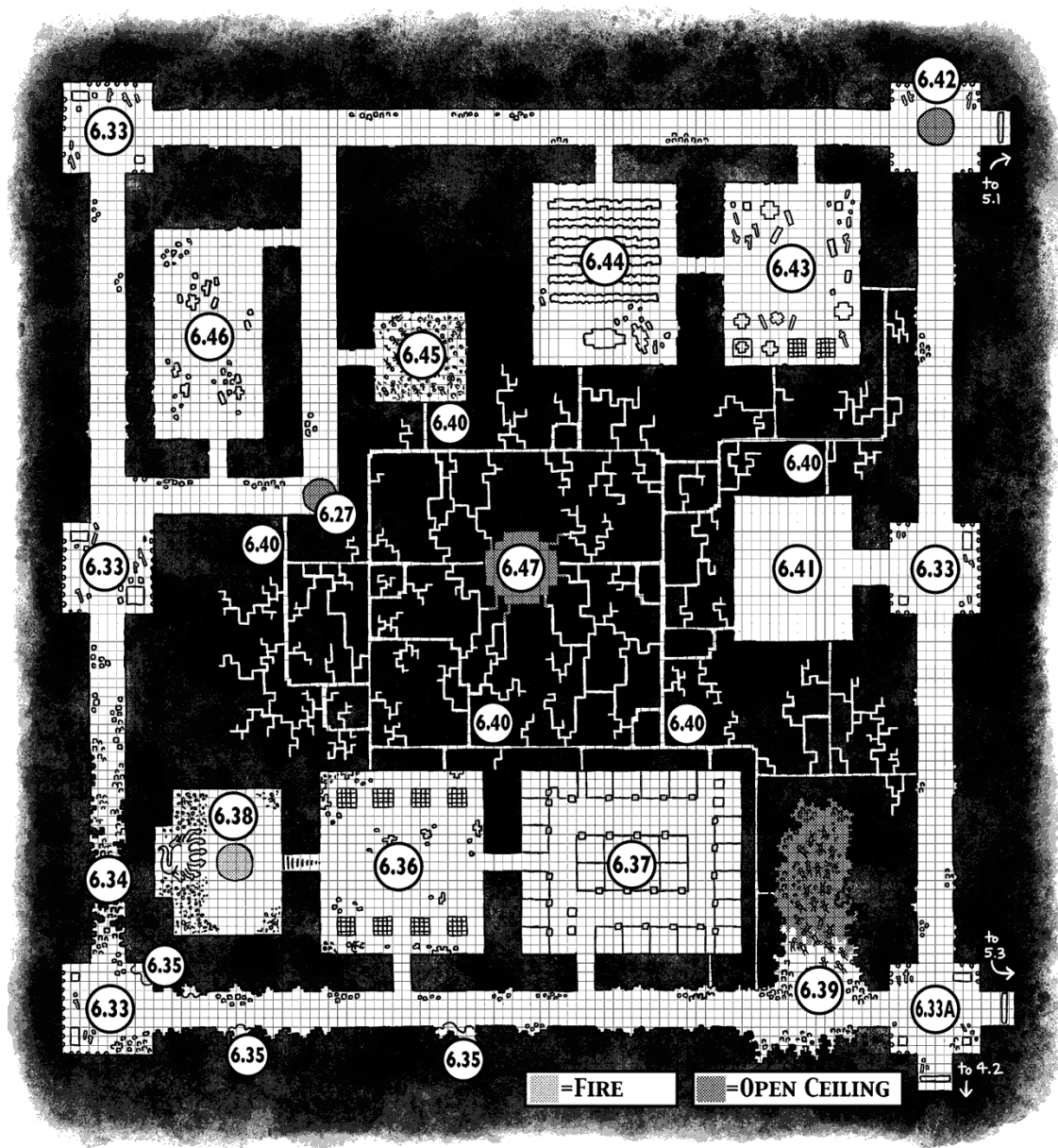
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## SIX FACES OF DEATH

In *Dragon*+ 21 Jason Thompson returned with another scenario this time supporting *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*. In *Six faces of Death* (for characters level 11-13) “an alien being, dark omens, and vanishing ships send the adventurers to a mysterious island newly appeared in the Sea of Swords. But can the characters uncover the mysteries of the Changing Island in time to save Faerûn from a terror from another plane?”

We've also added this entire adventure (also for free!) to the [DMs Guild](#)—with Jason adding the following new interior maps as well:

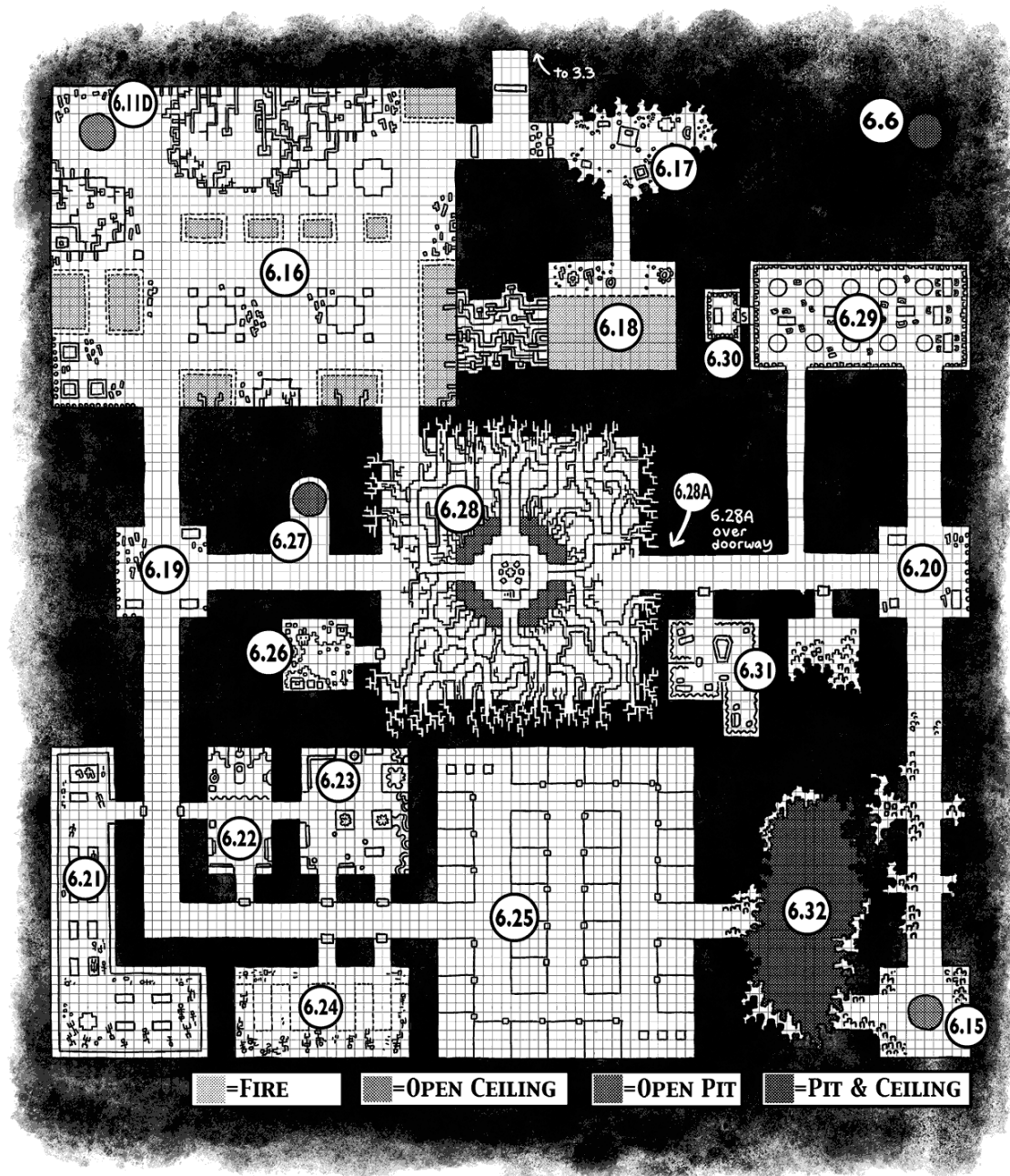
6 Faces map 1



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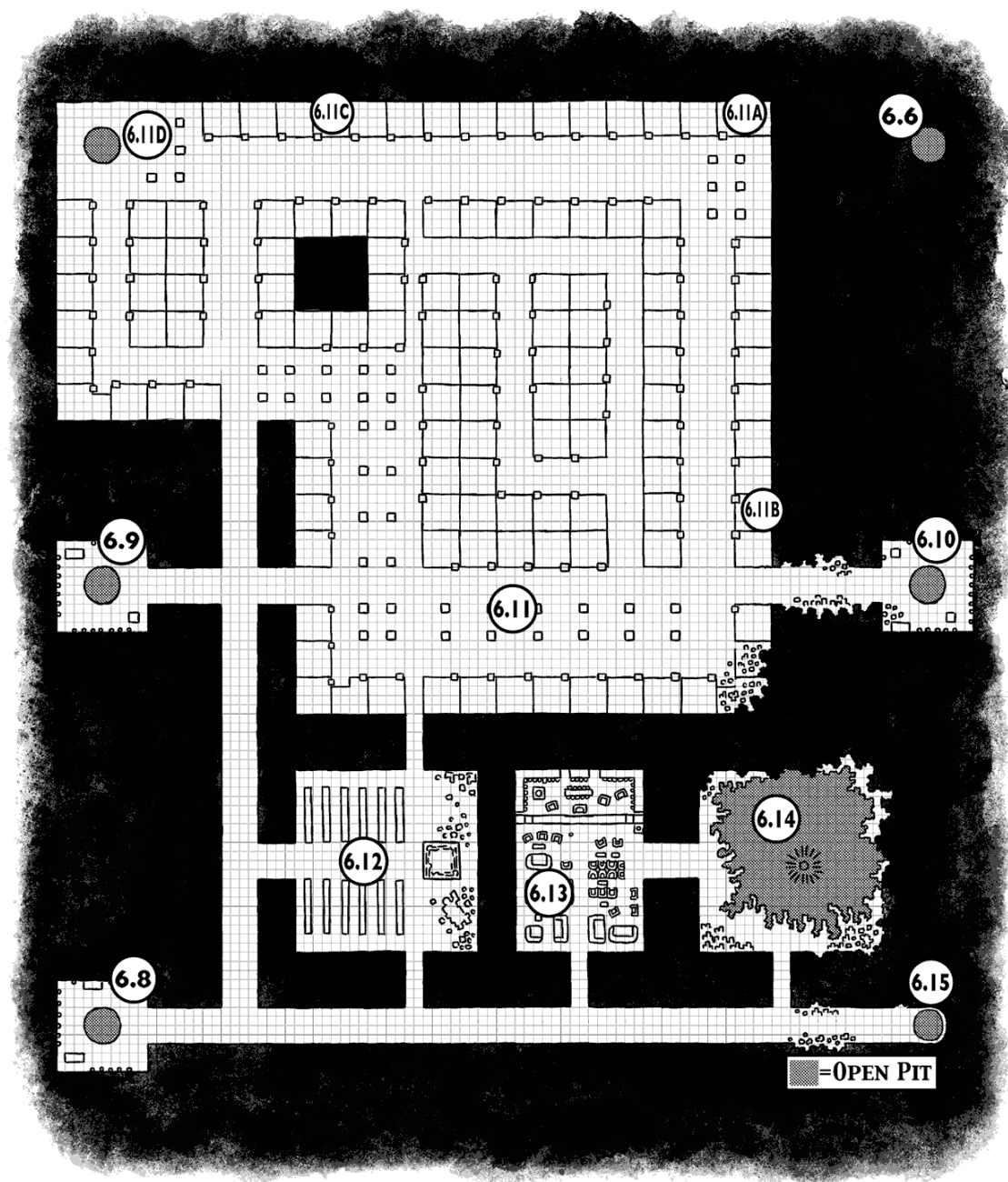
6 Faces map 2



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(high res image [here](#))

6 Faces map 3



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## Cartographers

And as always, our appreciation goes out to our amazing cartographers. This issue, these include Dyson Logos, Mike Schley, and Jason Thompson.

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# Creature Feature: Terror of Undermountain

Presenting the Terror of Undermountain! The terrifying creature crafted from our recent Adobe contest.



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**L**ast year our friends at Adobe offered up the following contest—the corridors of Undermountain abound with dreadful creatures of Halaster Blackcloak’s creation; design the most terrifying new monster using the powers of Adobe Photoshop, and come away with \$5,000 and a visit to the Wizards of the Coast offices!



Will Kalkanis-Ellis

Will Kalkanis-Ellis scooped the top prize, designing the foul beast known as the Terror of Undermountain. As Will explained in *Dragon+ 24*, when it came to his creature:

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“I wanted to make it pale because it lived underground and because I figured that would also help to show off the scars. I also wanted it to have its restraints still attached, to show that it had been confined. I think the thing I went back and forth on the most was whether or not to give it hair. I tried both painting it in and compositing in photos of hair numerous times and just couldn’t get it to look right.”

---

You’ve seen Will’s Terror of Undermountain! Here now are its game stats, courtesy of D&D team member Ben Petrisor:

[Download Terror of Undermountain](#)

The winning creature from the Adobe competition has also been turned into a mini figure, pictured below.



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## TERROR OF UNDERMOUNTAIN

A grotesque creature of Halaster Blackcloak's own creation, this legendary monstrosity was abandoned shortly after being unleashed within Undermountain. Now long forgotten and left to wander the great dungeon, it is driven only by its instinct to destroy.

**Infectious Hunter.** The Terror of Undermountain has cultivated a diseased bite from years of consuming carcasses and offal. Whenever it comes across a potent threat, it satisfies itself with biting that creature once, then falling back and waiting for it to die.

### TERROR OF UNDERMOUNTAIN

*Large monstrosity, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 94 (9d10 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Str +8, Con +8

**Damage Resistances** cold, fire

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** understands Common but can't speak

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Magic Resistance.** The Terror of Undermountain has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Stench.** Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the Terror of Undermountain must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the Terror of Undermountain's stench for 24 hours.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Terror of Undermountain makes three attacks: two with its claws and one with its bite.

**Bite. Melee Weapon Attack:** +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become diseased. While diseased, the target can't regain hit points. After every 24 hours that elapse, the target must repeat the saving throw, reducing its hit point maximum by 7 (2d6) on a failure. This reduction to the target's hit point maximum lasts until the disease is cured. The disease is cured on a success. The target dies if the disease reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

**Claws. Melee Weapon Attack:** +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

# Extra Life

As we give thanks for his Extra Life donation, Dungeon Master and Guest Editor Chris Boyce takes us on a trip to Sorceria—a campaign world decades in the making!



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*In 2018 Dungeons & Dragons participated in its sixth consecutive year with the Extra Life charity, benefiting the Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals. With huge appreciation to our entire community we raised over \$200k—and as thanks to our generous donors, D&D Team members offered a series of rewards.*

*These included Q&A discussions within Dragon+, which we are pleased to continue this issue with Guest Editor Chris Boyce. On behalf of the **D&D Team** we thank him for his support.*

If you’re interested in taking part in Extra Life 2019 as part of the **Dungeons & Dragons team** we encourage you to sign up. Just click “Join Our Team” at the top of the linked page!

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“It’s the first year **Extra Life** has really caught my attention,” Dungeon Master Chris Boyce tells *Dragon+*. “Someone mentioned it on one of the podcasts I watch, and I wondered what it was all about. When I looked it up, I knew it was a worthy thing to support. Any time children can be given an advantage, especially those who may

not have the financial means to help themselves, that's a great thing.

“At that point I didn't even know people raising money for Extra Life sometimes offered rewards! When I went to add my support I saw a link to those—and some of them were pretty funny. When you combine the fundraising aspect with the chance to interact with the D&D Team, it's a super cool initiative. I hope to contribute every year.”

“Interact” doesn't seem a big enough word for Chris Boyce's involvement in this issue of *Dragon+*. His generous donation won him the opportunity to come on board as our Guest Editor for Issue 27, writing our **Welcome Letter** and helping our team expand on multiple pieces of content. You'll see him pop up in a few places throughout this issue, as he adds his commentary and highlights the things he loves.

In response to that, we wanted to share the incredible campaign world Boyce has built for his tabletop gamers over decades of play. We highly recommend booking passage to Sorceria.



(Select to view)

## ORIGINS OF SORCERIA

Sorceria was born at a troubled time for the gods, better known as the late '80s. When gods in the Forgotten Realms became mortal and a couple of them were killed (during the Time of Troubles), Boyce borrowed those events to help establish a few core pieces of campaign lore in his home game. His God of Magic, Min Roman, decided he wanted to visit the Prime Material Plane to manipulate events. The other gods forbade him from interfering directly and warned him he could only influence things using

minions, dreams, and other similar actions.

“He killed himself in an attempt to be reincarnated as a mortal and

split his form into two pieces,” Boyce explains. “His magical ability went into an artifact called the *Black Skull*, and he himself was reborn as the first sorcerer in our world.

“The God of Magic had been evil but his reincarnated form, like Superman, was found by benevolent farmers. They raised ‘Sorcereas’, as they named him based on his powers, as a good guy. When he began regaining memories, he collected the *Black Skull* artifact, made a *Staff of Power*, and started to gather people with potential into a new city to teach them magic. When he finally died so many people revered him that he became the new God of Magic. The city was named after him and there’s a high temple dedicated to him within it.”



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Boyce’s campaign backdrop describes Sorceria as a city of magic and intrigue:

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Sorceria has become one of the greatest magical cities in the Multiverse. Powerful arcanists from all corners of the planes have travelled there to study—sometimes openly, sometimes in secret. The name of Azalon, Master of Sorceria, is well known. Through the use of his Black Skull artifact, he has managed to hold power over the city, a fact many of his enemies abhor and seek to secretly undo. This hidden power struggle, especially among the city’s Arch



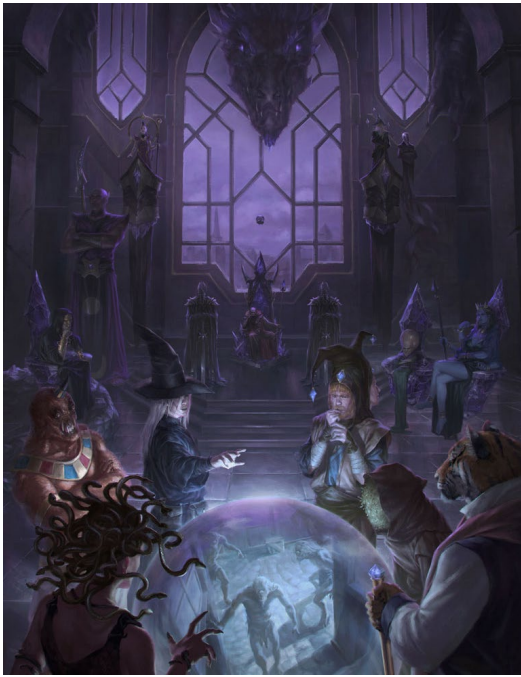
Wizards, has created an environment of perpetual intrigue.

At a glance, Sorceria is a city made of black stone and purple lights, defined by its cobblestone streets, Tudor-style townhouses, and floating fortresses. At the city's center, rising from a great hole in the earth, is the Master's Tower, a colossal structure whose peak disappears into the clouds above the magical metropolis.

Sorceria is guarded by an army of phantasmal guardians summoned by the Black Skull; creatures that take the shape of black magical skeletons, ghostly knights, and flying dragons. Black wizards called Magistars, known for their shaved heads and flying carpets, act as the city's judges and executioners. As might be expected, the streets of Sorceria are filled with wizards, witches, exotic shops, servant monsters, and the prolific use of magic in all its forms.

---

“We've been visiting this city on and off through decades of play. We've been slowly building it all that time—drawing maps, redrawing maps. The city has been destroyed two or three times, so there's now a couple of cities beneath the current city,” Boyce explains.



(Select to view)

“The *Black Skull* can change the structure of the city at the whim of its master. If a structure collapses it can be used to rebuild it, commanding black skeletons to wander around and make repairs.”

Aside from Azalon, the power in the kingdom resides with the Arcanum or Council of Arch Wizards. This is made up of spellcasters who have learned to cast 9th level spells, have resided in Sorceria for one year, and have remained in good legal standing. The members advise the Master of Sorceria and receive special protections within the city.

The characters themselves are members of an organization known as the Watchers, representing the Master of Sorceria and the Council of Arch Wizards. Boyce’s campaign material describes their task:



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Azalon and Sorceria have many enemies. Some of these threats are public knowledge and can be handled through the Arcanum’s

combined might. Other threats are more subtle and may come from within the Arcanum. For these more delicate investigations, Azalon has created a group known as the Order Oculus, or Watchers. The Watchers report directly to the Sorcerian Steward, Amon Kane, the right hand of Azalon. Small groups of Watchers are dispersed throughout the city, each investigating and combating internal threats that may never become public knowledge.



(Select to view)

“Despite their station, the characters still have to be careful about what they do. I always tell them, ‘You can walk into a tavern and people will respect you, but if you do anything that’s out of line you’re going to have to answer for it.’ In our city if you break a law that’s over a certain magnitude, one of the Magistars of the city will do something called putting you in the stones,” Boyce warns.

“The cobblestones of the city rise up as an elemental to surround the perpetrator and literally pull them into the street where they are

imprisoned. They go into suspended animation until the sentence is served. That can happen to anybody, including the Watchers if they don’t do the right thing.”

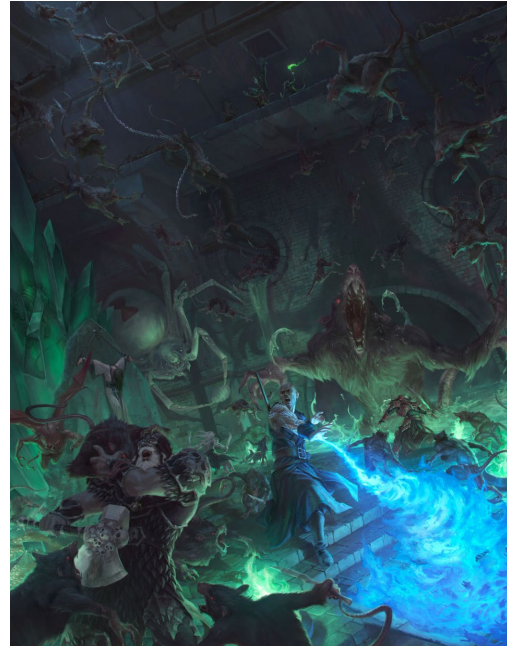
## CHARACTER BUILDING

The way the Watchers operate allow characters to be inserted into

and taken out of assignments without much explanation. If a player needs to miss a few sessions that's never a problem, they were simply operating with a group somewhere else in the city. If a player needs to quickly join a game, Amon Kane assigned them to help with the mission. "That's allowed us to revolve ten to thirteen characters in and out of the story," Boyce says.

Everything starts with a "session zero" where players discuss their character's background, family, and goals. Boyce also uses this procedure to help continue the world building: "Every time we encounter a new character, we flesh out something new about the city. That background may help me create a new building or organization in Sorceria."

That creative process doesn't stop when the dice start rolling. When the characters levelled up to 12th level, Boyce had them all write a storyline explaining what they'd been doing since 11th level. That includes the people they've been associating with, the interactions they've had, and their goals as they move deeper into the bowels of the city.



(Select to view)

"I then inject all those people into the game, including all the NPCs, family members, villains and people they're not getting along with. It doesn't even matter if any of that falls out onto the table when you're playing. Our game is very story driven and you can go down the rabbit hole very quickly. I'll give players as much or as little story as they want.

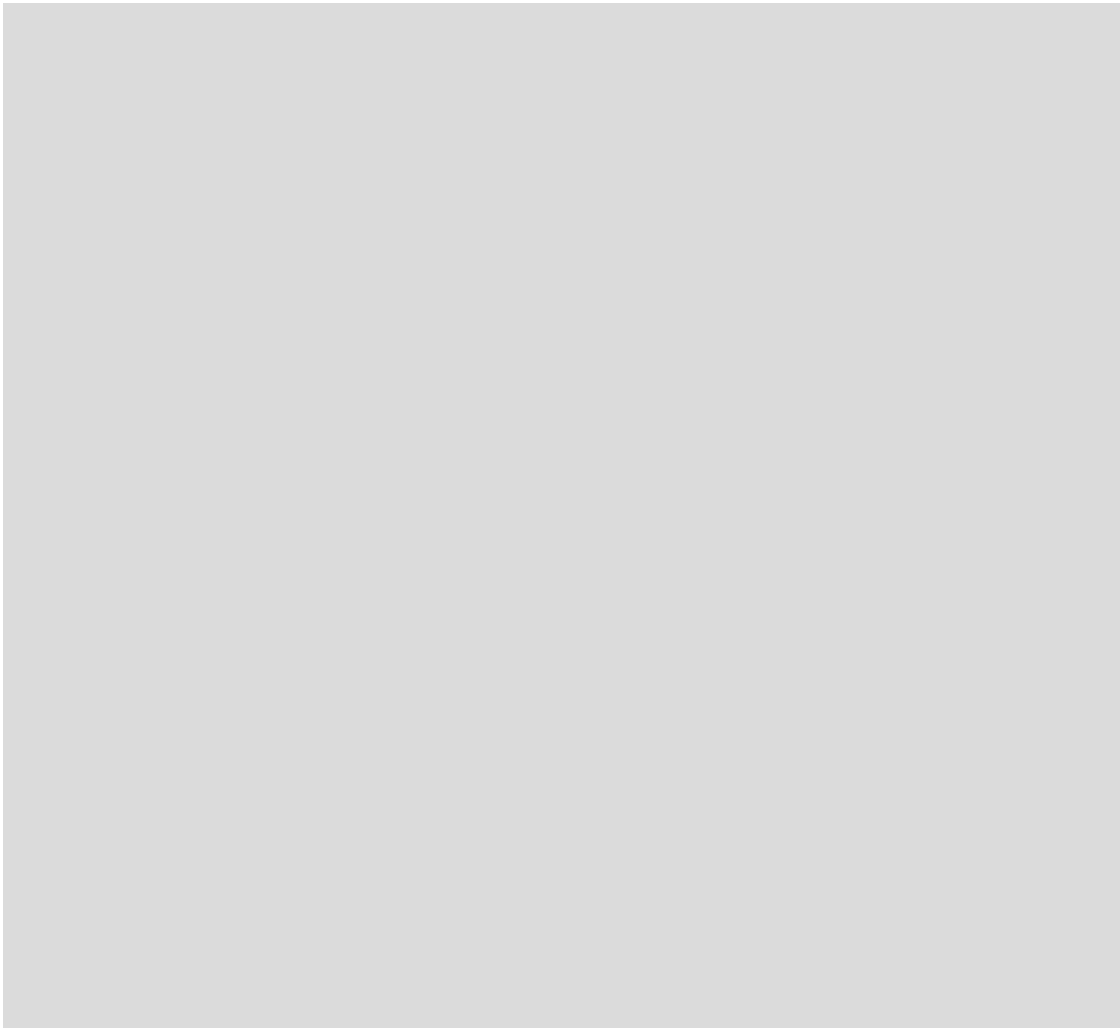
"One of the funniest things about



(Select to view)

the game is that in the early days we were all fighters, rangers and rogues—the peripheral people floating around such a magical city. These days most of the characters choose a magical class.”

---





## FAVORITE CHARACTER

“The guy I’ve played the longest is my necromancer Underhill. His race is shadowlock—white-skinned, pale, frail creatures that live in the Underdark. He’s dressed all in black, with the classic pointy hat and a staff with a skull on top. At one point during his dealings in the Outer Realms he pulled a *Necronomicon* from Orcus, and he and his nosferatu half-brother Craven wander around with *The Book of the Dead*. Even though he’s an NPC at this point, the characters can approach him for information about the Outer Planes. He’s a little iffy because he’s spent hundreds of years with the dead so you have to take everything he says with a grain of salt. Artist Wayne Reynolds drew him leaving his Black Fortress on the Negative Material Plane for the cover of our adventure *The Death Master*.”

“Any character that’s retired comes back as an NPC and gets weaved into the storyline,” Boyce continues. “We probably have hundreds of ex-characters wandering the streets at this point. I won’t ever point someone out by name, I’ll just say, ‘You see a guy in a black cap with a blue feather with an old pair of worn boots and he has a symbol of a fist on his chest.’ Maybe one person at the table might know who that is but it’s fun when they realize some of the greatest NPCs started out as very low-level characters and are now mythic villains. They’ve developed strong, enjoyable backgrounds and as characters they’re very flavorful.”

## ARTISTIC VISIONS

Not content with creating an unending collection of backstories and buildings to flesh out his magical city, Boyce also wanted his players to see visual representations of Sorceria. He commissioned artist Lie Setiwan, who previously created a cover for *Warhammer 40K*, to make one piece of art every month for a year. Setiwan has delivered ten of those works so far.



(Select to view)

“It can be expensive but it’s a really cool way to flesh out the details of your campaign. We send Lie background about what’s happening and sometimes I include detailed sketches and descriptions that might include up to 30 characters. He’ll come back to me and say, ‘Chris, you can only put four or five characters in a picture!’ But I’m happy to pay extra to get all of these people in the background, in windows or hidden behind pillars.

“It won’t mean anything to anyone except the people at the table, but it’s a lot of fun. The idea is we can keep adding art and hang that up on the walls. Then before you know it I can point and say, ‘This is

where you are.””

Those visual aids no doubt come in handy in a world that touches upon many other worlds. Alongside the Delve (“an under-city the players visit a lot”) and the pocket dimensions in all the wizards’ towers, Sorceria’s portals to other planes truly put the multi into multiverse. Boyce namechecks Greyhawk, Black Maw Bog, the Forgotten Realms, Dragonlance, and Spelljammer as elements that have already been weaved into his world.

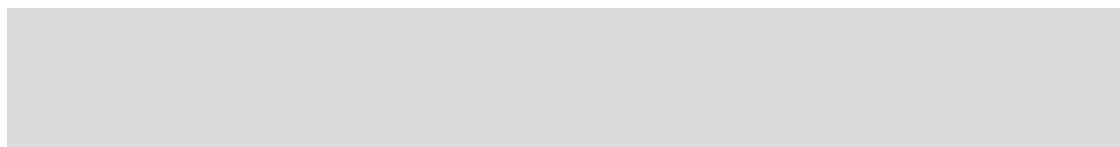
“If someone sits down with me to make a character and says, ‘Can I be from here?’ I say, ‘Absolutely!’ We try to connect the timelines, which is sometimes difficult, but maybe time works differently so you show up ahead or behind by a few years. The idea is you can play any race, be from any world, and have any backstory.”



(Select to view)

That ability to assimilate multiple worlds can have big or small consequences. When *Tomb of Annihilation* was released, Sorceria didn’t suddenly give way to the Jungles of Chult but the threat of death hung heavy over the city.

“Chris Perkins and the rest of the D&D gang come up with so much great stuff and it’s sometimes hard to use all of that but I can steal encounters and other key things. For example, we brought the death curse into our world. At the time the characters were adventuring in the Astral Plane, dealing with the lich queen of the githyanki. We decided many liches over different prime worlds were all trying to bring about the same thing Acererak wanted to achieve and this was just one of their stories.”







## FAVORITE REALM

“The original *Ravenloft* is my favorite module ever. It’s the classic Dracula tale. You can’t escape because of the mist and you’ve got to move forward into Barovia. You’ll fight the wolves, visit the burgomeister, and ultimately head to the castle to face Strahd and figure out how to kill him. In the city of Sorceria we have a specialty subclass called deathslayer—effectively a ranger that focuses on killing undead. The High Deathslayer’s key mission was to kill Strahd. He left his station as the head of the temple to destroy him and end the curse. The great thing is Barovia could be anywhere at any time. We’ve interacted with it so many times.”

---

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

As you might expect from a DM who uses character creation to build stories across multiple planes and commissions professional-level art for his campaign, Boyce keeps an impressive record of the campaign's storyline. His biography of Sorceria includes everything from cycles of the moons, important historical dates, details of key NPCs, and a timeline of all the events that have occurred since the game started.

“I even include events before we started playing so we have that pre-history, too. I also forecast events that are probably going to happen. I can then have the characters run into fortune tellers or soothsayers, allowing me to vaguely predict big events in the future. It's always fun to do that.”

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# Axis & Allies

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# Streaming Highlights

This issue's highlights reel includes a dedicated D&D news channel, live onstage play from the Edinburgh Fringe festival, and an ENnie Award winning show.



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## WANDERING MONSTERS

When Stephen Twining—better known as **Von Corellon** on Twitter—was laid-off from a marketing gig in New York City, he decided to put his social media and journalism experience to work “for (chaotic) good.” The result was *Wandering Monsters*, which uses an eclectic style of reporting to keep the world up to date with the latest from the greatest roleplaying game in the world.

“The D&D online community is exceptional, with entire cottage industries sustained by artists, designers, streamers, cartographers, and crafters,” Twining tells *Dragon+*. “It’s a real pleasure providing coverage to such a creative, engaged, and nurturing community.”

“In particular I really dig providing coverage of the DMs Guild and the host of creators and artists it supports,” he adds, citing projects such as the *Uncaged Anthologies* and *Friends, Foes, and Other Fine Folks* as being part of this renaissance in game design. “The DMs Guild creates entrepreneurial opportunities for creators and a wild range of D&D content for gamers and fans. It’s essential to the community and is a frequent theme on *Wandering Monsters*.”

### WATCH

Twining also gets to use his wider digital skills on the show, including “the first and only D&D news ticker streaming stories like CNN.” *Wandering Monsters* also uses slowed-down D&D moments to create its innovative titles.

“I wanted to provide context for each episode’s content and to incorporate compelling imagery, both new and familiar,” he says. “I use a ‘practical effects’ approach to video manipulation—sampling with a digital camera, dipping into 8mm effects, and warping the speed to create something identifiable yet distinctly different.

“My favorite sample was the Brazilian car commercial based on the classic D&D cartoon, with those iconic silhouettes rising out of the fog of battle. Not that such an amazing piece needed any interpretation—it was sheer brilliance!”

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## ADVENTURERS WANTED

“Of all of the moments in this year’s show in Edinburgh—including a goblin bard playing his bagpipes to distract a kraken and a halfling rogue taking a short break from terrifying combat to head to the kitchen to make some lasagna—nothing beats a first-time player taking to the stage,” recalls Chris Hislop, co-DM for *Adventurers Wanted* at the Fringe festival. “She was the mother of another on-stage player no less, with zero experience of D&D, but she got into the spirit of things by summoning a spiritual weapon teapot!”

“What’s always incredible about the show is how loads of different people who have never met before come together and tell a story with each other,” adds Chloe Mashiter, co-DM for the fifteen-hour event. “I really loved what is best described as the ‘Legion of Gerald’s’ from this year’s show and that’s precisely the kind of amazing everyone-

builds-on-the-idea bizarreness you can get in D&D!

“There was the original player character Gerald, a changeling character becoming Gerald, a magical simulacrum Gerald, an illusory Gerald, an undead Gerald, and even a manticore Gerald—Gerals upon Gerals, all part of everyone having fun with each other!”

Two of the interpreters we spoke to for this issue’s look at [D&D and sign language](#), Thomas Malone and Kieron McMullan, provided live BSL interpretation for the three-day event.

*Adventurers Wanted* runs a monthly D&D game live on stage at London’s [Rosemary Branch Theatre](#) in the UK. You can find more details of upcoming performances on the [official website](#), watch previous shows on [YouTube](#) and sponsor them via [Patreon](#) to claim exclusive rewards.

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## FANDOM UNCOVERED: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

[Roth Cornet](#) used her visit to *D&D Live 2019: The Descent* to speak to the extended Dungeons & Dragons family and chart the game’s incredible journey from its early days in basements across America to its current explosion of popularity. Her *Fandom Uncovered* documentary follows the streaming boom pioneered by *Critical Role*

to the game's influence on some of Hollywood's most prolific creators, in a heartfelt look at the pastime.

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## DUNGEONS & DOODLES

Artists Emi Tanji, Taylor Ingvarsson, and Richard Whitters join host Bart Carroll for the quick-on-the-draw sketch show to treat us to mind flayer mashups and crazy Avernus vehicles.



In the following episode artists Stan! and Caleb Cleveland join Carroll on the *Dragon+* livestream for a nautically themed Dungeons & Doodles.

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[Learn more](#)

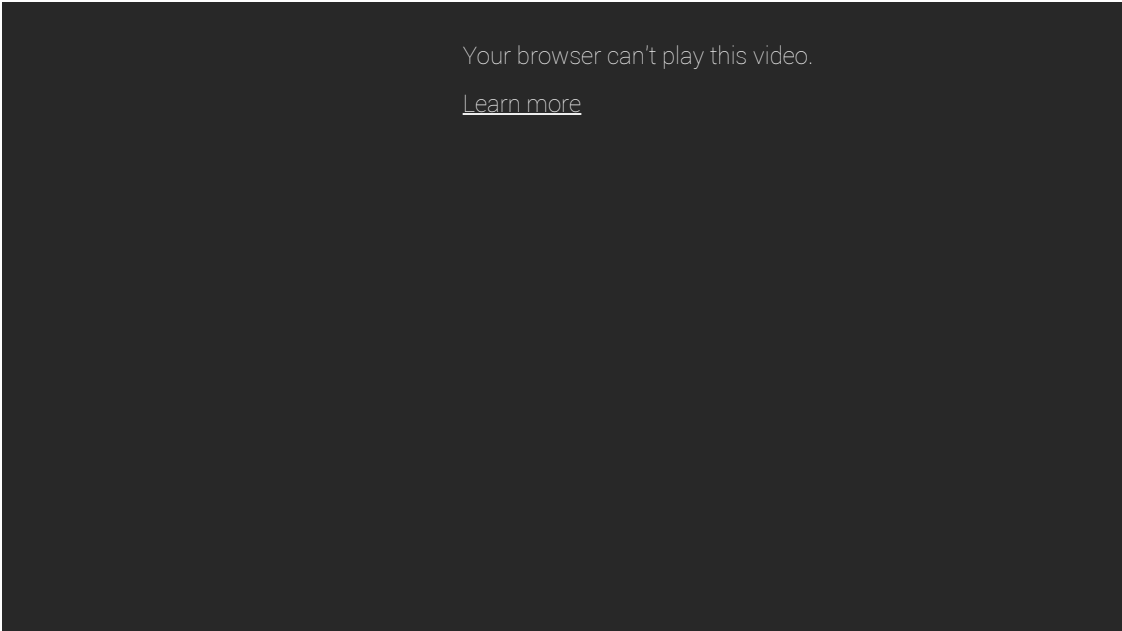


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## RED MOON ROLEPLAYING

Congratulations to UK-based Red Moon Roleplaying for winning a Silver ENnie award for Best Podcast at this year's GenCon! The actual play podcast was created by a team of Swedish and British roleplayers and sees the players stay in-character to focus on immersion and atmosphere, using dark ambient background music to boost that feeling.

“Dungeons & Dragons offers fantastic opportunities not just for epic high fantasy but also to explore both the horror genre and to work with grayscales and darkness. Ravenloft especially is very near and dear to us and last year we played through *Curse of Strahd*, bringing perhaps the darkest take on that campaign to actual play aficionados across the globe,” says Mattiaz Fredriksson, who played Dawnbringer Roman in the campaign.



Your browser can't play this video.

[Learn more](#)

“Hopefully our success in the ENnies shows that there is an audience out there not just for the incredibly successful comedy-focused style of actual play but also for other ways of telling tabletop stories. The more diversity in styles used in the podcast scene, the better for all of us.

“The award was also incredibly humbling and gratifying after all the countless hours of work that we have put in to crafting the show. But

we are just getting started!”

Red Moon Roleplaying will soon begin exploring the Astral Plane in *Podcasts of Planes*, which can be found in the [Dungeon Delve podcast feed](#). They’re also tackling *Baldur’s Gate: Descent into Avernus* together with their friends [How We Roll](#) and [Tabletop Hoard](#) beginning on September 17, 2019 wherever podcasts are found, on their [YouTube channel](#) and on Red Moon Roleplaying’s [official website](#).

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## STRANGER THINGS 3

There are so many good things to say about the third season of *Stranger Things* but the internet reaction to some of its ’80s riffs has been amazing. *Hopper P.I.* is our firm favorite, with the Hawaiian shirt of Hawkins’ gruff Sheriff allowing for some tache-tastic hijinks.

And there’s plenty more to draw from the Netflix show’s third outing thanks to the mind flayer’s position at the heart of the story. If *Baldur’s Gate 3*’s explosive [first trailer](#) made you want to know more about mind flayers then the *Bodysnatchers*/creature feature vibe of *Stranger Things 3* had fans of the show falling over themselves to tell all.

When it comes to the mind flayer within D&D itself, the following articles dared to delve into its history within the game:

## Stranger Things' newest villain is as old as D&D itself

### What Is Stranger Things' Mind Flayer Monster Exactly?

## GUEST EDITOR'S PICK

“A.J. Pickett’s [YouTube channel](#) does a deep dive on monster ecology and history in D&D. Each video collects together all the information ever produced for a creature, using material from all editions of the game. For example, what motivates the creature, where does it come from, how does it fight, and what things might be found in its lair? It’s a real benefit to watch the relevant video and get a comprehensive take on an upcoming adversary before introducing a specific creature into your campaign.”

[WATCH NOW](#)

“Fred Wheeler’s [YouTube channel](#) takes the time to examine specific rules for fifth Edition D&D—for example, if you are confused on how Surprise works, there’s a video explaining it. Fred has an uncanny ability to make a topic appear very simple but also very funny at the same time. He’s just an average guy who loves D&D, making him incredibly relatable.”

[WATCH NOW](#)

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# Unearthed Arcana: Primal Path and Monastic Tradition

Testing out an unpredictable Primal Path feature  
for barbarians and a Monastic Tradition for  
conflicted monks.



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## Playtest Material

The material here is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by final game development and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

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## BARBARIAN: PATH OF THE WILD SOUL

This proposed addition to the barbarian's Primal Paths is for

characters who have lived in the Feywild. While this region abounds with beauty, it also saturates the body of anyone who resides there with unpredictable emotion and rampant magic.

When a barbarian who follows this path rages, it is a bellowing roar for freedom and an explosion of expression which manifests itself in unpredictable ways. For example, at 3rd level a Path of the Wild Soul barbarian will roll on a Wild Surge table to determine which magical effect is produced when they rage.

#### MONK: WAY OF THE ASTRAL SELF

This Monastic Tradition deals with monks who have an internal struggle with their ki. They see their mystical energy as a representation of their true form and this “astral self” has the capacity to be a force of good or destruction, with some monasteries training students to either temper their nature or embrace their impulses.

For example, a 3rd level Way of the Astral Self monk can summon spectral arms which hover near their shoulders to act as weapons or aid with Strength checks and saving throws.

Access these new playtest options for barbarian and monk by downloading the PDF.

[Download the PDF now](#)

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To see the full treasure trove of Unearthed Arcana articles, covering new classes and feats, conversions of rules from previous editions, and much more, [visit the archive](#).



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# UNEARTHED ARCANA

## Barbarian and Monk

This document provides playtest options for the barbarian and the monk.

### This Is Playtest Content

The material in this article is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by final game design and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

## Primal Path

At 3rd level, a barbarian gains the Primal Path feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Path of the Wild Soul.

### Path of the Wild Soul

The realm of the Feywild abounds with beauty, unpredictable emotion, and rampant magic. A barbarian exposed to this realm feels emotions powerfully and magic saturates their body.

When a barbarian who follows this path rages, it is a bellowing roar for freedom, an explosion of expression, manifesting in unpredictable ways.

#### Path of the Wild Soul Features

Barbarian Level	Feature
3rd	Lingering Magic, Wild Surge
6th	Magic Reserves 1d4
10th	Arcane Rebuke
14th	Chaotic Fury, Magic Reserves 1d6

#### Lingering Magic

At 3rd level, your body reacts to the presence of magic. You can cast the *detect magic* spell without using a spell slot or components. Constitution is your spellcasting ability for this spell. You faintly glow a color corresponding to the school of magic you detect (you choose the colors).

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum of

once). You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

#### Wild Surge

Starting at 3rd level, magic erupts from you as you rage. When you enter your rage, roll on the Wild Surge table to determine the magical effect produced.

If the wild surge requires a saving throw, the DC equals 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Constitution modifier.

#### Wild Surge

d8	Effect
----	--------

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Necrotic energy bursts from you. Each creature within 30 feet of you takes 1d10 necrotic damage, and you gain temporary hit points equal to the sum of the necrotic damage dealt to the creatures.  |
| 2 | You teleport up to 20 feet to an unoccupied space you can see. Until your rage ends, you can activate this effect again on each of your turns as a bonus action.  |
| 3 | You conjure 1d4 intangible spirits that look like flumphs in unoccupied spaces within 30 feet of you. Each spirit immediately flies 30 feet in a random direction. At the end of your turn, all spirits explode and each creature within 5 feet of one or more of them must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 2d8 force damage. |
| 4 | Arcane energy enshrouds you. Until your rage ends, you gain a +2 bonus to AC, and whenever a creature within 10 feet of you hits you with an attack, that creature takes force damage equal to your Constitution modifier.  |
| 5 | Plant life temporarily grows around you: until your rage ends, the ground within 10 feet of you is difficult terrain.   |
| 6 | Arcane energy taps into the minds of those around you. Each creature within 30 feet of you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or you see a glimpse of the creature's thoughts, learning how it plans to attack you. As a result, the creature has disadvantage on attack rolls against you until the start of your next turn.          |

- 7 Shadows weave around a weapon of your choice you are holding. Until your rage ends, your weapon deals psychic damage instead of its bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing damage, and it gains the light and thrown properties with a normal range of 20 feet and a long range of 60 feet. If you drop the weapon or throw it, the weapon dissipates and reappears in your hand at the end of your turn.
- 8 A beam of brilliant light lances from your chest in a 5-foot-wide, 60-foot-long line. Each creature in the line must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 2d8 radiant damage and be blinded until the start of your next turn.

## Magic Reserves

At 6th level, you can channel the magic surging inside you into other creatures. As an action, you can touch a creature and roll a d4. The creature recovers an expended spell slot of a level equal to the number rolled. If the creature you touch can't recover a spell slot of that level, the creature instead gains temporary hit points equal to five times the number rolled.

You take force damage equal to five times the number rolled.

When you reach 14th level in this class, you increase the die to a d6.

## Arcane Rebuke

At 10th level, the magic crackling within your soul lashes out. When a creature forces you to make a saving throw while you are raging, you can use your reaction to deal 3d6 force damage to that creature.

## Chaotic Fury

At 14th level, you become a wellspring of wild magic while you are raging. As a bonus action, you can reroll on the Wild Surge table, replacing your current effect with the new one.

# Monastic Tradition

At 3rd level, a monk gains the Monastic Tradition feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Way of the Astral Self.

## Way of the Astral Self

Monks of the Way of the Astral Self have an internal struggle with their ki. They see their

mystical energy as a representation of their true form, an astral self. This form has the capacity to be a force of good or destruction, with some monasteries training students to either temper their nature or embrace their impulses.

## Forms of Your Astral Self

The astral self is a translucent embodiment of the monk's psyche and soul. As a result, the form of an astral self reflects the mind of the monk who manifests it. Your astral self could be a humanoid knight with a helmeted face and large, muscular arms, or it could be a golden metallic form with thin arms like a modron.

When choosing this path, consider the quirks that define your monk. Are they obsessed with something? Are you driven by justice or a selfish desire? Any of these motivations could manifest in the form of your astral self.

## Way of the Astral Self Features

Monk Level	Feature
3rd	Arms of the Astral Self
6th	Visage of the Astral Self
11th	Awakening of the Astral Self
17th	Complete Astral Self

## Arms of the Astral Self

At 3rd level, your mastery of your ki allows you to summon a portion of your astral self. On your turn, you can spend 2 ki points as a bonus action to summon the arms of your astral self for 10 minutes. These spectral arms hover near your shoulders. You determine the arms' appearance based on the qualities of your character.

While your astral arms are summoned, you gain the following benefits:

- You can use your Wisdom modifier in place of your Strength modifier when making Strength checks and Strength saving throws.
- The arms are monk weapons and have a reach of 10 feet. The arms deal radiant or necrotic damage (your choice). When you attack with the arms, you can use your Wisdom modifier instead of your Strength or Dexterity modifier for the attack and damage rolls.
- Immediately after you use the Attack action with your astral arms on your turn, you can make one extra attack with your astral arms as a bonus action. The number of extra attacks increases when you reach certain levels in this class, increasing to two at 11th level and three at 17th level.

## Visage of the Astral Self

Starting at 6th level, you can summon the visage of your astral self. On your turn, you can spend 1 ki point as a bonus action, or as part of summoning your astral arms, to summon this visage for 10 minutes. The spectral visage covers your face like a helmet or mask. You determine its appearance based on the qualities of your character.

While your visage is summoned, you gain the following benefits.

**Wisdom of the Spirit.** You have advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Intimidation) checks.

**Astral Sight.** You can see normally in darkness, both magical and nonmagical, to a distance of 120 feet.

## Awakening of the Astral Self

Starting at 11th level, you tap into the greater power of your astral self. While you have both your astral arms and visage summoned, you gain the following benefits.

**Deflect Energy.** When you take acid, cold, fire, lightning, or force damage, you can use your reaction to deflect it. When you do so, the damage you take is reduced by 1d10 + your Wisdom modifier + your monk level.

**Empowered Arms.** Once on each of your turns when you hit a target with your astral arms, you can deal extra damage to the target equal to your Martial Arts die.

**Word of the Spirit.** When you speak through your visage, you can direct your words to a creature of your choice that you can see within 30 feet of you, making it so only that creature can hear you. Alternatively, you can amplify your voice so that all creatures within 600 feet can hear you.

## Complete Astral Self

Starting at 17th level, your connection to your astral self is complete, allowing you summon it entirely. On your turn, you can spend 10 ki points as a bonus action to summon the arms, visage, and body of your astral self for 10 minutes. This spectral body covers your physical form like a suit of armor, connecting with the arms and visage. You determine its appearance based on the qualities of your character.

While your astral self is summoned, you gain the following benefits.

**Armor of the Spirit.** You gain a +2 bonus to AC while you aren't incapacitated.

**Astral Barrage.** Whenever you use the Extra Attack feature to attack twice, you can instead attack three times using your astral arms.

**Ki Consumption.** When a creature within 10 feet of you is reduced to 0 hit points, you can use your reaction to regain ki points equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1).



## Next Issue: Dragon+ 28

New sourcebook *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* takes us back to Khorvaire and we burn rubber in Avernus when Dragon+ returns in October!



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If you thought Max Dunbar's amazing concept art for *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* showed you everything you needed to know about a trip to the Nine Hells, think again! In issue 28 we put the peddle to the metal as we take an in-depth look at the infernal war machines powering the Blood War.

Those aren't the only vehicles in the spotlight when we return in October. Technology meets high fantasy once more as new sourcebook *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* brings the airships of that world back to D&D, and we'll also be previewing a very special version of WizKids' *Falling Star Sailing Ship*.

Jason Thompson also showcases his latest comic map taking a swipe at the layers of Hell, artist Kayla Cline discusses her images of Ravenloft, and animated duo Rick & Morty will be giving us double trouble as we look ahead to volume two of their comic book and chat with Kate Welch and Shelly Mazzanoble about the upcoming *Starter Set* and its hilarious adventure.

There's all this, plus more exclusive previews, must-read fiction, another delve into the imposing *Dragon* archive, all our regulars such as the best video and audio highlights, and much, *much* more!

(Contents subject to change)



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A huge thank you to Chris Boyce and everyone who helped with the creation of this issue.

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